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EDITORIAL

INTERNAL MATTERS

President Bush's gastrointestinal eruption in Japan on January 7 (undiplomatic flu?) prompts the usual hard-nosed speculation. Was his egestion at a state dinner an unsubtle comment on the Japanese refusal to grant further concessions on auto imports? Did anyone call Orrin Hatch, the reigning Senate exorcist, to check the possibility of demonic possession? Did the presidential tummy rebel against a piece of sushi? That would be like Prime Minister Miyazawa whoopsing a Big Mac.

Perhaps the President's stomach was reminding him that it was time to come home and face reality. Hopping about among time zones and waving to crowds is bound to stress the constitution, however flattering it is to the ego. So welcome back, George. Reset your body clock, pop a few Halcions and have some pork rinds.

As you may recall, a lot of people here are dyspeptic too—about unemployment and the sputtering economy. You're going to come up with an economic program in your State of the Union Message. It was good to hear that you're willing to breach the legal wall that prevents the transfer of defense funds to domestic needs. The bad news is that you're expected to recommend defense cuts of only $6 billion in the next fiscal year. That won't do. *Pace* Everett Dirksen, a billion here, a billion there isn't real money when you're talking defense spending. It's time for a fundamental conversion of the warfare economy, and cutting a handful of Seawolf submarines and Stealth bombers isn't enough.

The Congressional Democrats aren't thinking big enough either. Citing a Brookings Institution study, Robert Borosage recently outlined in *Mother Jones* how some $150 billion could be redirected into domestic priorities just by slashing the military budget for defending Western Europe. Those are the kinds of numbers Congress should be talking, and it should start now.

'THEDEFICIT'
Robert Heilbroner

BAGHDAD BUG-OUT
Alexander Cockburn

BANK MERGERS & CONSUMERS
Mark Green
Glenn von Nostitz

FOOTBALL—THE MAIMING GAME
Jacob Weisman

PABLO NERUDA
Don Bogen

LIBERALISM RECONSIDERED
Robin L. Einhorn

TAKING BACK THE CONSTITUTION

TIME FOR A PEOPLE'S CONVENTION

GORE VIDAL

November 18, 1991. Despite jet lag, I find myself, half-asleep, making a speech in a nineteenth-century auditorium in Pittsburgh. I stand behind a lectern at stage left, blinded by film and television lights. At stage right stands the youthful "Bob Roberts," played by Tim Robbins, who is also the director and writer of this film (as yet untitled). We are fictional characters. I am the incumbent liberal Senator from Pennsylvania; he is the challenger. "Bob" is a self-made millionaire turned pop singer, now turned politician. He is a sort of David Duke but without the luggage of a lurid past. He will win the election.

I have a weird sense that I have done all this before. Certainly, the hall is familiar, even to the entire text of the Gettysburg Address in giant gold letters above the stage. Then I realize that "I" have been through all this some weeks earlier. Only I was Harris Wofford and "Bob Roberts" was Dick Thornburgh and they, too, spoke in the same hall. That time Wofford won; this time he—"I"—lose. Then as my peroration resounds, I realize that I have never actually been in Pittsburgh before and that my familiarity with the hall is because of CNN—or was it C-Span?

Once I had finished my work as supporting "cameo," I moved on to Dartmouth where I spent a week in Hanover, New Hampshire, chatting with faculty and students. But, again, unreality kept breaking in. My first morning in Hanover I looked out the bedroom window and for a moment I thought I was back at my old school, Exeter, from which I had graduated a half-century earlier, unless a recurrent night-

(*Continued on Page 88*)

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LETTERS.

Abuzz and Atwitter

Fort Collins, Colo.
Gore Vidal's "The Birds and the Bees" [Oct. 28], a stripped-down minimalist view of sex, reproduction, love and the "Meaning of Life," is nothing if not entertaining. There are people to whom I can't wait to read it. But as Columbo would say, "There's just one thing . . . " If seed shooting and egg carrying are all that matters, and neither they nor anything else has "Meaning," what curious impulse led Vidal to set us straight on this matter? *Walter Royal Jones Jr.*

Chicago
Brilliant bad boy Gore Vidal explains sex so amusingly that correction can only seem pedantic, yet cherished memories require that something more be said. I will not say "love" because the word has become so cheapened by romanticists and demagogues. Nevertheless, experience daily demonstrates that the infatuations of youth's blooming season can lead to enduring sober affection that becomes partnership defying logic. No, Mr. Vidal, with genuine respect, a good marriage is a fulfillment of both mates beyond species determinism. *Francis Jennings*

Brattleboro, Vt.
In the week when the men of the Senate ganged up on Anita Hill, when a mad misogynist slaughtered twenty-two innocents without making a discernible impression on a House of Representatives sworn to uphold the right of every "shootist" to fire at will, it was cold comfort to be chatted up by Gore Vidal on men's natural brutishness. We can only fake caring relationships, Vidal insists, and these frauds prove costly when they run counter to our natural inclination "to shoot semen as often as possible into as many women . . . as possible." Do tell. The week's sad events, enacted by men deeply alienated from their human nature, doubtless confirm Vidal in his smug cynicism. As for me, I can only gather in my children and my wife, my loved ones of both sexes and sexual persuasions, and try a little tenderness. *John P. Wesley*

San Francisco
As a male single parent I can attest that some men do have a capacity for warm, caring, nurturing relationships, which we can exercise without "faking" it and without any real cost to our nature, even if our "teats" are not connected to a dairy. *Allen Michael Turner*

Berkeley, Calif.
I agree with Gore Vidal that everyone who avoids adding to the population burden of our planet should be accorded our highest esteem, whether the achievement is as a result of same-sex relationships, or by couplings with animals, vegetables or minerals, or through the practice of birth control or abstinence. But there seems to be a lapse in logic here. Many among my friends who define themselves as gay or lesbian are also parents by choice. By the way, the notion of doing the deed with George or Barbara Bush, young Neil, or any of that hellspawn is, as they say in Texas, enough to puke a buzzard. *Robbin Henderson*

San Francisco
How does Vidal explain such human sexual phenomena as celibacy, polyandry, lifelong homosexuality (in men and women), promiscuity in women, self-imposed childlessness in heterosexual couples, sexual desire in old age, childhood sex play, orgies, sexual sadism? These are the phenomena that make human sexuality interesting. Human sexuality is complex and provocative of thought. Animal sexuality is not. *Martha Avery*

Newton, Mass.
It is not how many offspring a male has that determines evolutionary success. It is the number of offspring who survive and have offspring. I suspect that males willing to share the task of protecting, teaching and feeding a few offspring have had more evolutionary success than ones "designed to make as many babies as possible." *Anthony L. Schlaff*

Madison, Wis.
Vidal claims that "there is nothing . . . in the male psyche that finds monogamy natural or normal." However, pair bonding has evolved in many species to maximize the survivability of the offspring. Because humans take so long to mature, pair bonding and the sharing of rearing responsibilities insure greater survivability of the children. Unlike any other mammalian species, humans will mate throughout the fertility cycle of the female. Many theorists hold that this unique human characteristic has evolved to strengthen the pair-bonding relationship. So we cannot say that the prime biological directive of the human male is to impregnate as many women as possible. In fact, such a genetic program is highly improbable. *Charlotte Schubert*

Santa Barbara, Calif.
Vidal should brush up on his biology. While it is true that "Man plus Woman equals Baby," it is also true that man or woman plus microbe equals sickness and death. Even 5,000 years ago it must have been pretty clear that sleeping around tends to lead to a short and unhealthy life, while staying at home improved the odds of survival. Vidal probably formed his opinions during those few years when penicillin was removing all the microbes. *David Phillips*

Columbia, Mo.
To set the record straight: Many birds, including eagles, loons, kittiwakes, albatrosses and all fifteen species of cranes, mate for life. Beavers, foxes, dik-diks, elephant shrews and gibbons are all mammals that form long-term, monogamous relationships. Early human societies probably *were* tribal, but they were also matrilineal—a system of birthrights that does not necessitate knowledge of the father's identity. Then patriarchy was invented. Sexual taboos were created to enforce the patrilineal inheritance of wealth and power. Female sexuality was transformed into a commodity. Rape and abuse emerged as ways of reminding women who's boss. *Leslie J. Matthews*

Berkeley, Calif.
Vidal told only half the story—that the male's function is to shoot semen into as many women as possible. The obvious female function, to which Vidal is as blind as the next, is not merely to accept a male to fertilize an egg but to choose from among the male population those whose variations are deemed most viable. Survival of the fittest is less by warfare than by sexual selection. And it is the women who decide. *Adah Maurer*

San Francisco
The nihilism of Vidal's statement "once born, death—that's our ticket" is chilling. In my life and career I have seen death in many forms, and birth. They are only the punctuation marks. What goes between is what has the potential to be calculated doublespeak, mundane dialogue, or poetry. We are all poets, if we try. *William J. Meecham, M.D.*

Los Angeles
Gore Vidal's article is at strange variance with those hopeful Personals in *The Nation*'s weekly Classified section. Whether male or female, gay or straight, ad writers are looking for something beyond shooting or getting shot, to use Vidal's words for sexual activity. *Nation* readers are, I assume, a rational, pragmatic, straight-shooting lot. Yet not a single hopeful mentions that he or she just wants sex. Instead, they seem to want long conversations and walks along the beach, foreign films and serious poetry. Is it any wonder we are all—including the intrepid Gore Vidal—very much bewildered? *Marshal Alan Phillips*

Seattle
Gore Vidal is the American Jonathan Swift. *Payton Hart*

New York City
A definition: Satire is brave. Gore Vidal is an island of satire entirely surrounded by the watery. *Penelope Gilliatt*

The Nation welcomes letters—typed, double spaced and no longer than 300 words, please.

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EDITORIALS.

Islamic Clout

Echoes of 1962 were plainly audible last month in the celebratory din following the landslide victory of Islamic militants in Algeria's parliamentary elections. Thirty years ago this summer, thousands of [illegible]dents of Algiers draped themselves in the national [illegible]ged through the capital city's historic Casbah [illegible]e of French colonial rule. Car horns through-[illegible]ounded the triumphant "Hail Algeria!" [illegible]on. But even then, in the heady early days of secular Arab nationalism, when "Socialism and Progress" were the passwords of a brash new self-confidence, some revelers could be heard honking and shouting the alternative battle cry, "*Allahu akbar!*"

The task of guiding Algeria into the postcolonial era fell in 1962 to a 43-year-old guerrilla chief named Ahmed Ben Bella, who modeled his leadership style after that of another soldier-statesman of peasant extraction, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt. Like many of his co-revolutionaries, Ben Bella had risen to prominence through the ranks of the military, at the time the only means of advancement for the sons of peasant families. And like the other nationalist military regimes

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that took power in the Arab world during the 1950s and 1960s, Ben Bella and his cohorts were convinced that non-alignment in foreign policy and state socialism at home were all they needed to steer the country through the difficult days ahead.

On December 26, 1991, Algeria's three-decade experiment in secular nationalism came to an abrupt end. Candidates of the Islamic Salvation Front (F.I.S.) took a decisive lead over the ruling National Liberation Front in the first round of parliamentary balloting. After a second round is completed on January 16, the F.I.S. may command a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly, enough to amend the Algerian Constitution. Presidential elections, scheduled for later this year, could turn the apparatus of state, as well as government, over to the F.I.S.

As soon as the first-round votes were tabulated, analysts in the West began weighing in with declarations that an ominous new step in the forward march of Islamic fundamentalism had been taken. A *New York Times* correspondent hinted darkly at a conspiracy, improbably spearheaded by the able but impoverished leader of Sudan's National Islamic Front, to topple secular regimes throughout the region. And the Iranian sponsors of Middle Eastern fundamentalism were pronounced ready to seize the moment to loose well-trained armies of religious zealots upon Western "interests" worldwide.

To be sure, the new Algerian Parliament, if it is ever allowed by President Chadli Benjedid or the army to convene, will turn back the clock on everything from women's rights to education to freedom of the press and more. But the discontent that has brought the F.I.S.—and like-minded fraternal organizations in Jordan, Lebanon, Sudan and elsewhere—to the fore has its origins not in a conspiracy of global conquest but in more parochial concerns stemming from the economic malaise that afflicts many nations in the Middle East.

Wherever it appears—and in each country of the region its character is distinct—Islamic militancy is primarily a response to domestic economic insecurity. In Algeria, where unemployment stands at 30 percent, a growing segment of the population faces a lifetime of joblessness and dependence on the state. Government officials are widely viewed as corrupt and ineffective, and the rapacious demands for austerity from international lending agencies fuel resentment toward the West. Religious radicalism has become the preferred mode of social protest throughout the Arab world because of its authenticity as an indigenous movement, its language of purification, its putative incorruptibility and its promise of a moral economy with jobs for all (male) believers, as well as the sense of community it offers the faithful. It thrives best among those with lofty professional expectations and meager prospects.

It is easy to ignore the fact that a yearning for social and economic justice drives many recruits to religious extremism. The historic failure of the Arab left to get beyond the rhetoric of national liberation and offer a program for economic renewal has opened a void the Islamicists are only too happy to fill.

But if the governments of the region don't act to suppress the movement—as it appears they may—the Islamic trend is likely to stagger under the burden of making good on its exalted promises. In Jordan, where Islamicists have enjoyed a taste of power since parliamentary elections in 1989, their representatives succeeded only in pushing through a series of ominous but largely symbolic measures—banning alcohol from domestic Royal Jordanian flights, for example, and removing "blasphemous" books from school curriculums.

But on the central issues of the day—like how to deal with the I.M.F. or how to respond to the economic challenge of a united Europe—Islamic movements in Algeria and elsewhere offer only slogans and pieties.

Feliz Año Nuevo

Too much champagne! That seemed the most likely explanation for the New Year's Eve accords signed by negotiators for the Salvadoran government and the F.M.L.N. guerrillas. More than just an agreement to stop fighting, the accords are a blueprint for the radical restructuring of Salvadoran society. United Nations mediator Alvaro de Soto described them as "the closest that any process has ever come to a negotiated revolution."

In exchange for agreements to purge army officers guilty of human rights abuses, reduce the armed forces to less than half their current size, abolish security forces and form a new national police force that will incorporate some ex-combatants of the F.M.L.N., the rebels agreed to lay down arms and to compete for power through electoral means. The guerrillas will now have to demonstrate their popular support through votes. Land redistribution carried out in areas controlled by the guerrillas is to be legalized, and the accords obligate the Salvadoran government to implement a broader agrarian reform program and to modify economic policies that have increased unemployment and poverty.

This is heady stuff, and cynics will question whether such sweeping agreements can actually be implemented. It will depend on whether the international pressure for a settlement that was so artfully orchestrated by former U.N. Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar and de Soto, his able deputy, can be maintained throughout the stages of implementation. During the negotiations U.S. officials occasionally expressed unhappiness with de Soto, accusing him of favoring the guerrillas, but in the final stages Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Bernard Aronson and U.N. ambassador Thomas Pickering helped obtain important concessions from the Salvadoran government and army to make an agreement possible.

The United Nations will continue to play a key role in monitoring and verifying compliance with the cease-fire and other agreements and will also guide postwar reconstruction efforts. The accords call for a National Reconstruction Fund to implement the agreements and rebuild the social and economic infrastructure of the country. International assistance for this effort is to be channeled through the U.N. Development Program.

Speaking in the early minutes of the new year, Aronson pledged the United States to "support El Salvador in ... difficult process of national reconstruction and to d... we can to make sure that the peace works." The

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demonstrate that support will come in the next few months as Congress debates the foreign aid bill.

Since 1980 the United States has spent more than $4 billion in efforts to defeat the F.M.L.N. Congress and the Bush Administration should now provide generous reconstruction assistance, through multilateral channels, to help rebuild El Salvador. The surest sign that the Administration is serious in its support for the negotiated agreements will be its recommendation that the bulk of U.S. assistance be carried out through the U.N. Development Program. GEORGE VICKERS

George Vickers, a professor of sociology at Brooklyn College, is director of the Institute for Central American Studies.

Thedeficit

The American economy is in serious trouble. Why? Because of thedeficit. I write it as one word, like a term from an incomprehensible language, because not one American in a hundred can tell you what thedeficit is or does. But they can all tell you what it means. It means that nothing can be done to cure the present trouble.

What could be done if we didn't have thedeficit?

Right away, we might cut payroll taxes, which would immediately increase the public's spending power. We might start up a quick program to employ the unemployed. We might transfer funds to the states to reopen libraries, rehire teachers, expand social services to the wretched homeless and the drug addicts.

For the longer run, we might begin to rebuild our decaying infrastructure. Infrastructure is to the private sector what a railroad embankment is to a railroad. Our economy is limping because our infrastructure is holding it back.

The fact is, however, that we cannot do any of those things. Why? Because they would run up thedeficit.

Only three courses of action are possible in the face of this paralyzing problem. First, we can pray for a turnaround. That's the course we have been taking for some time. Unhappily, there is no reason to think our prayers will have any more effect on the economy in the future than they have had in the past.

Second, we can take whatever fiscal measures will not worsen thedeficit. We can cut some taxes and increase others: Democrats would like to cut taxes on lower-income families and raise them for rich families; Republicans would like to do the opposite, by lowering capital gains taxes and putting taxes on gasoline or whatever. Those remedies are not likely to turn around a $6 trillion economy dead in the water.

Third, we can rid ourselves of the impossible obstacle itself. By this I do not mean dismissing thedeficit or finding a magic way around it. I mean understanding what it means.

Understanding begins with definition. A deficit is the amount of money the government borrows during a year. That's all it means. In the year ending June 30, 1992, the government expects to borrow about $350 billion.

Is this a disaster? That depends on what the borrowing is for. If we borrow $350 billion to build a high-speed rail network, to bolster education, to underwrite research and development, to restore ailing Americans to working health, I would call that anything but a disaster. It might, in fact, be the way to get a becalmed economy moving again. Studies have shown that public investment would be even more effective in increasing our productivity than the same amount spent for private investment, because private investment today is robbed of much of its effectiveness by the very lack of a supportive infrastructure.

On the other hand, it would be a disaster if we borrowed the $350 billion to build more Stealth bombers, to pay interest on the national debt or to cover the costs of normal everyday government. In exactly the same way, it would be a disaster if corporations borrowed large sums in order to expand production of a line they knew was obsolete, or to pay interest to their bondholders or to meet the payroll. In the private sector as in the public sector, there is good borrowing and bad borrowing. Good borrowing finances new wealth, which will bring more income to corporations and more tax revenues to government. Bad borrowing adds nothing but additional obligations and nothing to meet them with.

Now for the key question. How much of the $350 billion of borrowing for fiscal 1992 will be good borrowing, and how much bad? The answer is that we do not know. There is no separation of our government deficit into borrowing for growth-promoting purposes and borrowing for "household"

(*Continued on Page 94*)

★

Far Eastern Travel

The trip that Bush first scheduled, then postponed,
Had been designed to show our George enthroned
As monarch of the newly ordered world.
But then a monkey wrench was rudely hurled
Into those plans: Some frank, heroic soul
Told Bush that half the country's on the dole,
And that no international maneuver
Could put to rest the ghost of Herbert Hoover.

The trip went on. They simply changed the theme.
He'll bring home jobs, they said. The team
He'd take along to help with this charade:
Important C.E.O.s, all overpaid.
The trip became a metaphor, no less,
For policies that helped produce our mess,
By following that U.S. business rule:
Why don't we just repackage, not retool.

Calvin Trillin

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

When the U.S. Press Fled Baghdad

Most American reporters had cleared out by the time the first bombs began to fall on Baghdad. The first week in January the Al-Rashid Hotel was stuffed with news people; then, as the January 15 deadline drew near, the numbers swiftly thinned out.

Marie Colvin of the London *Sunday Times* recalls this deadline eve as "a moment that made one think. I remember watching Patrick Tyler of *The New York Times* and Scott MacLeod of *Time* and someone from *The Boston Globe* packing their bags and checking out. The atmosphere was conspiratorial. They'd say, 'We have information Iraq is going to be bombed. You're mad to stay.' "

Between January 13 and 15 Bernd Debusmann, a German who was the Reuters man there, says "a sort of mass hysteria" developed. Lots of rationales were being offered up as reasons for leaving. Colvin, an American who had been working in the Middle East for five years, remembers the U.S. press corps getting daily briefings from Joe Wilson, the U.S. chargé d'affaires, telling them that if they stayed they would end up as "ground round in a hole in the ground." In the end Wilson chartered a plane and urged all Americans to leave.

The Americans told their European colleagues that their editors were getting calls from the White House telling them to get their people out. "I really believe," Colvin says, the Administration "didn't want anyone to report what was going to happen. They themselves didn't expect a low body count."

Many of the American correspondents had arranged for their home offices to send code phrases such as "The baby is being delivered," which would signal the bombing was about to start. These phrases began to come in on the night of January 16. Demoralization increased.

Some American reporters tried hard to stay. Others were eager to leave, while protesting that though they yearned to remain they were reluctantly following orders from home base. Dan Williams of the *Los Angeles Times* disputed the instructions of his foreign editor, Alvin Shuster, adding to his arguments the fact that his wife, Lucia Annunziata, the correspondent for *La Repubblica*, was staying.

Later the story circulated that Shuster had promptly called up the foreign editor of *La Repubblica* and persuaded him to recall Annunziata, thus forcing Williams's hand. Shuster says this isn't the way it happened, and that there was no White House pressure.

"It was a concern for Dan's safety. We'd lost two correspondents—Joe Alex Morris in Iran and Dial Torgerson on the Honduran border. We worried about massive bombing, or reporters being taken hostage. Yes, in retrospect it would have been better if he'd stayed. As for calling *La Repubblica*, I knew the foreign editor there and called him to ask what his plans were regarding Annunziata. He said he wanted her out but hadn't been able to contact her."

Lee Lescaze, foreign editor of *The Wall Street Journal*, similarly ordered out his reporter, Geraldine Brooks, who was keen to stay in Baghdad. "I thought it was too risky," Lescaze says now. "I told her I needed her to promise she would leave. I was wrong. I wish she'd stayed. But I've seen bombing and I've seen it be inaccurate. I thought they wouldn't have been able to file and it wasn't worth the risk. I was clearly wrong about safety. We tried to get back in a week later but couldn't get the visa. To my knowledge there was no pressure from the Administration."

Other motives have been suggested. One is that editors didn't want to take political heat for having their people "behind enemy lines." Max Hastings, editor of the London *Daily Telegraph*, announced as much publicly. He had a sharp exchange on the BBC World Service with Robert Fisk of *The Independent*, who pointed out that while the *Telegraph* had ordered its own reporter to leave Baghdad it was quite happily printing the Reuters stories from Debusmann. What you really mean, Fisk said, is that you are prepared to have reporters behind enemy lines, you just don't want to take responsibility for them. Later Hastings admitted he'd made the wrong decision.

Some reporters suggest that editors and publishers may have been worried about damage suits from families of reporters killed in the bombing, forcing them to pay out vast compensation after charges that they had made their correspondents take unacceptable risks.

Most of the Americans left. Some, like the Canadian Allen Pizzey of CBS, who had run great risks in Lebanon, were very straightforward. "He had a long conversation with me," Colvin remembers. "He said I was crazy; it was not worth staying, not worth dying. He brought up David Blundy [a *Sunday Telegraph* correspondent shot dead in San Salvador by the army] and said, Who remembers him now? After the first night of the bombing a lot more left [including CNN's Bernard Shaw, who, in the subsequent accounts, insisted that he be escorted to the border by a CNN flunky, who then had to make the dangerous trek back to Baghdad]. I'm amazed, quite aside from the professional obligation, that they'd leave on the eve of the big story. This was one of those times you knew it was an absolutely great story and there were all these people checking out of the hotel, with the American journalists all holding meetings, talking themselves into leaving."

Most of the British stayed, including Brent Sadler of Independent Television News and John Simpson of the BBC, who defied direct orders to leave, saying he'd resign and work as a freelance. Finally, the BBC said that while they still were ordering him to leave, they wanted him to know they wouldn't fire him. Two reporters from another current affairs show left, but their cameraman stayed. The two who left got him fired, but he was promptly hired by another organization desperate for footage. My brother Patrick Cockburn of *The Independent*, who stayed, remembers the cameraman spending a night in the garden of the Al-Rashid to film the bombing and lurching in at dawn, bitten by every mosquito in Baghdad.

"The result of the flight of so many journalists," Patrick recalls, "was that the war was dehumanized. Most of the TV shots were going to be what the pilots were seeing. And de-

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spite the presence of CNN or ABC, TV is easily deniable. Anyone (i.e., government officials) counterattacking can produce lots of detail, which only a print journalist can refute."

The truth of this observation will be acknowledged by anyone remembering the Pentagon's insistence that the powdered-milk plant was a biological-weapons factory, or that purely military targets were under attack. It took careful description in print to establish that a great many bombs were going awry, particularly outside Baghdad, and that civilian infrastructure—roads, sewers, electrical grids, etc.—was under systematic and repeated assault. It's clear from Bob Woodward's book *The Commanders* that the Pentagon was acutely sensitive to news coverage of targeting; and types of bombing—and consequent civilian casualties—were partly determined by expected coverage. There would probably have been a lot more Amiriyas if there had not been some reporters in Baghdad, savagely denounced though they were at the time for being Saddam's propagandists, because they described or photographed those women and children incinerated in the shelter.

It should be added that many U.S. editors, having either ordered or countenanced the departure of their own reporters from Baghdad, then declined to avail themselves of eyewitness reports filed by British or Spanish or German journalists still in the city. Indeed, Alfonso Rojo, for a time the only print journalist in Baghdad, filing to *El Mundo* and being reprinted in the British *Guardian*, became invisible in the United States, with Peter Arnett being described as the only Western correspondent in Iraq. This invisibility was enhanced by Arnett, who intermittently refused to let Rojo use the CNN link to file his copy.

The Nuke Screw-Up

One year later, the flight of the flower of the American press from Baghdad has mostly been forgotten, as has the great failure of the press—with a couple of exceptions—to do much more than echo the Bush Administration's claims, beginning in the early fall of 1990, that all avenues toward a peaceful solution had been explored. One can argue that Saddam Hussein never seriously contemplated a negotiated withdrawal, but the assertion is moot because the various Iraqi overtures were mostly ignored or suppressed from public view.

Just as bad was the press's failure to challenge the Bush Administration's contention that Saddam was only months, weeks—even days—from perfecting a nuclear device. Bush's agitprop department took a few months to discover that Saddam-with-nukes was what really bothered the citizenry, then played up the theme fortissimo, with hardly a demurrer from the big opinion-formers.

In the end it turned out that prudent predictions calculated before the hysteria were on target (see the very well-informed piece by the nuclear physicist Norman Dombey in *The London Review of Books* for October 24, 1991). In November 1990, Warren Donnelly concluded in a Library of Congress brief that Iraq "cannot now make nuclear explosives and probably will not be able to for many years." Dombey put that possibility in the mid-1990s, further pointing out that at most Iraq had been only in minor technical contravention of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

The high-tech nature of the war was much exaggerated. The Patriots performed very poorly. An Israeli intelligence general has claimed after review of the relevant data that not a single Iraqi Scud emplacement was destroyed through air attack. David Evans, military correspondent of the *Chicago Tribune*, says that officers involved in the ground assault reckoned that as few as 15 percent of the hulks of Iraqi weaponry had been destroyed from the air. He remains dubious about the very large casualty figures put about when the war was over. The "100,000-200,000 Iraqi military dead" seems to have been a mythic creation. More plausible estimates are probably in the region of 25,000 casualties (wounded and killed in a ratio of about four to one), plus some 4,500 civilian casualties from the bombing. One Kurdish intelligence officer who served at the front told Patrick Cockburn that whereas the bombing had destroyed many tanks, his division of some 10,000 had sustained only about 200 dead.

The heavier disasters came later; first in the toll inflicted by Saddam on those urged by Bush to rebel, namely the Shiites in the south and the Kurds in the north; then in the deaths consequent upon the embargo and upon the destruction of economic and agricultural infrastructure. What with infant mortality, victims of typhoid, malnutrition and so forth, the postwar casualties—ongoing—far outstrip the direct war deaths.

WASP Madness

President Bush looked awful even before he flew all the way to Tokyo to throw up on Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa's shoes. David Frost recently emerged from a White House interview to tell friends the Prez seemed in ghastly shape. On his usual regimen of Halcion, the jet-lag drug, Bush flew to Hawaii, jogged; flew to Sydney, jogged; flew to Singapore (very humid), held a news conference in full sun; flew to Seoul (very cold), played tennis with President Roh Tae Woo in 34-degree temperature on an indoor court; flew to Kyoto, played *kemari* (in which a flaccid deerskin ball is kicked about by elderly aristocrats); then back to Tokyo where the 67-year-old itinerant played doubles tennis with the Emperor Akihito and his son (lost 6-3, 6-3). Then, suffering a tummy upset and taking Tigan, on to the fateful rendezvous with Saumon Frais Mariné à L'Aneth au Caviar (pickled raw fish), which he consumed shortly before vomiting. It reminds me of the schoolboy translation of Cicero's line when he describes his indictment of Catiline: *Exit, excessit, erupit, evasit* ("he got up to go, he rushed out, he burst from the building, he escaped"). The schoolboy had it as *exit*, he went out to dinner; *excessit*, he had too much to drink; *erupit*, he was violently sick; *evasit*, he said it was the salmon. If it had been fugu Bush would have been dead before he hit the ground. Good morning, President Quayle. Pat Buchanan is watching the situation closely.

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BELTWAY BANDITS.

DAVID CORN

X-Men and J.F.K.

If you are sick of Oliver Stone's *JFK*, turn the page. It may be late, but—as someone who has spent years researching the C.I.A.'s anti-Cuba campaign of the 1960s, during which I have reviewed thousands of pages of government documents and interviewed C.I.A. officers directly involved—allow me to pile on. The secret war on Cuba figures prominently in Stone's conspiracy theory that U.S. military officers, intelligence operatives and freelance anti-Communists plotted, with L.B.J.'s O.K., to kill Kennedy because he was softening on Communism. In a let-me-spell-it-out-for-you scene, a fictitious former Pentagon official who calls himself X tells Kevin Costner that after the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion, an upset Kennedy yanked away the C.I.A.'s covert action responsibility and handed it to a General Y in the Pentagon. General Y then ran the anti-Castro program, code-named Operation Mongoose, and in doing so developed a paramilitary capability that was later turned against the President. The general is not named, but there is a quick shot of his desk. However—damn!—the nameplate is obscured by a plant. A few letters, though, are visible. The name, I recall, seems to start with an "L" and end with "LE."

In real life, the chief of Mongoose was Gen. Edward Lansdale, a former ad man who in the 1950s ran creative and sometimes nutty counterinsurgency programs in Asia and the Pacific. In late 1961 he was handed the Cuban account by John and Robert Kennedy, who were exasperated with a C.I.A. that had not yet rid them of the turbulent Castro. Lansdale drafted unrealistic schedules for Mongoose, an interagency program, and dictated that a certain number of agents be in place in time to organize a revolution against Castro in October 1962. But Lansdale was a general without troops, a super-bureaucrat; the main operations against Castro were being conducted by a large C.I.A. unit managed by William Harvey, a gun-toting, hard-drinking ex-F.B.I. man.

Mongoose never amounted to much. There were a few attempted raids, some economic sabotage and some money passed to Cuban exiles, but the project was hampered by high-level policy-makers who dickered over just how far the agency could go. Throughout months of handwringing, though, Bobby Kennedy, who represented his brother, called for more action. Mongoose was ended by the Cuban missile crisis in 1962—but not because, as X says, Kennedy had promised Khrushchev he would leave Cuba alone. The Kennedy Administration wanted a fresh start. Lansdale and Harvey were booted out. Contrary to Stone's movie, Lansdale had not come to head a covert, Pentagon-based paramilitary unit that could blow away a U.S. President. It was Harvey who had been in charge of the attempt to use mob-linked assets to assassinate Castro. Lansdale resigned from the military on October 31, 1963, and took a post with the Food for Peace program. He also devoted time to pressing his view that the key to victory in Vietnam was not to dump large amounts of troops and money into the country—and enrich the military-industrial complex—but to develop counterinsurgency and civic action programs to capture Vietnamese "hearts and minds."

After the missile crisis, C.I.A. operations against Cuba continued. In 1963 the agency, following J.F.K.'s wishes, directed commando strikes against the island and provided money and weapons to rebels who had set up bases in Central America from which they could attack Cuba. Federal officers did apprehend anti-Castro freebooters who were not working with the agency, and this crackdown annoyed exiles already disappointed that Kennedy had not invaded Cuba during the crisis. But the secret war was still on.

In the fall of 1963, Kennedy transmitted the slightest of peace feelers, but at the same time agency actions were picking up. The point is, Kennedy never went soft on Castro—and while some rabid anti-Castro Cuban exiles may have thought their crusade would be helped by Kennedy's assassination, Mongoose and its demise could not have provided General Y the means or motive for bumping off Kennedy. In fact, Kennedy's murder rang the death knell of the secret war on Cuba. Soon after Johnson took office, the word passed through the Company: The new commander wasn't interested in Castro. C.I.A. paramilitary activities against Fidel came to a halt.

Everybody Must Get Stoned

Stone's treatment of history parallels the Christic Institute's approach. Ever since I wrote in these pages that journalist Danny Casolaro, who was found dead last summer, was influenced by Christic's "silly 'secret team' theory," many outraged Christic supporters have written to demand an explanation. To be brief, Christic's S.S.T. theory holds that a small band of military and intelligence officials have in the past three decades hijacked and perverted U.S. foreign policy. It notes—somewhat accurately—that the same people have been involved in the anti-Castro program, the secret war in Laos, covert activity in Vietnam, the Iran initiative, the *contra* support program and other shady national security episodes. But this coterie was not running the show. It was implementing decisions made by a series of Presidents and, in most cases, supported by the entire national security bureaucracy. A conspiracy of underhanded operatives makes for a better story (someone even put out a secret-team comic book) but, in this case, it does not illuminate reality. Stone and the Christics are obsessed with an important topic: covert government and its ills. Stone does deserve two cheers for reminding people that government lies (cf. the Warren Commission). But forcing and twisting facts into comic-book format should not be confused with promoting truth.

Out With the New

Discerning the campaign message of Bob Kerrey, wondering whatever happened to the S&L crisis, pondering the impact of Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger's past business dealings (he was a director of two major Yugoslav companies before he took this post) on U.S. policy toward the Serb-Croat civil war—all while buying socks—is hard work. So I'm off on a two-month leave to pursue less pressing matters. This column will resume in April.

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ARTICLES.

SURVIVAL OF THE FATTEST?

Bank Mergers Are Taxing Consumers

MARK GREEN AND GLENN VON NOSTITZ

In a year that saw the three largest bank mergers in U.S. history, and in the same month that saw the President and Congress's on-again, off-again effort to cut astronomical credit card rates, Citibank, the nation's biggest bank, took two unprecedented steps: It halved its checking account interest to a miserly 2 percent and created a $50 annual "account administration fee" for processing Keogh accounts. So while Citibank pays 2 percent on its checking balances, it charges 19.8 percent on unpaid credit card balances.

Welcome to consumer banking in an era of 20 percent commercial real estate loan default rates. Taxing consumers by higher fees, higher borrowing rates and lower earnings on deposits is now the favored prescription for bailing out a banking system reeling from two decades of disastrous Third World and commercial loans [see Herman Gold, "Gorge Big Banks, Starve Customers," December 23]. And because bank mergers are reducing competition, banks are getting away with milking consumers to subsidize their own mismanagement.

Banks are inflicting on consumers the death of a thousand cuts: A few fee increases here and lower certificate of deposit (C.D.) rates there and pretty soon it adds up to real money. Lower- and middle-income customers at most large commercial banks end up actually losing money because fees charged them exceed the interest they earn.

Many of the same bankers who exercised poor judgment when handing out loans to build shopping malls and hotels that no one needed have shown great ingenuity in devising new ways to pass the buck to consumers. A few examples:

§ charging credit card "late fees" and "overlimit" fees, a practice that is tantamount to charging interest on interest and that produces $1.1 billion in revenue annually

§ using a 365-day year instead of a 360-day year to compound interest earnings

§ charging a fee for each day an account is overdrawn, such as the $3 daily fee at First Chicago

§ charging a dollar for using a once-free automatic teller machine

§ charging penalties as high as $10 for accidentally writing more than the limit of three checks a month on a money-market-rate account

Of course, most of the mounting bank-fee revenue comes from simply raising existing charges far higher than the inflation rate. Not long ago, major commercial banks such as Manufacturers Hanover in New York City typically required only a $1,500 balance in a checking-with-interest account to avoid monthly fees of a few dollars; now the minimum balance is $5,000, the monthly fee is $12 and 50 cents is charged for each check written. And such fee hikes do not come in small increments; at Chase Manhattan the basic passbook savings account, traditional refuge of small depositors and senior citizens, now requires a $1,000 balance to avoid fees, up from $500 last year, and the fee just doubled as well.

Are banks generously returning some of this extra revenue to their loyal depositors? Don't count on it. In a throwback to the 1950s, on December 19 the savings account rate offered by Citibank FSB of Chicago fell from 4.34 percent to a nostalgic 3.15 percent, the lowest in the country. And consumers are suffering rate shock when they roll over their C.D.s; by mid-December one-year C.D. rates had plummeted 47 percent since their early 1989 peak, and in the past year C.D. rates have dropped more than three times as fast as home mortgage rates. The last time the prime matched mid-December's 7.5 percent was early 1987, but at the time six-month C.D.s paid an average rate of 5.95 percent, compared with 4.7 percent now. With the prime now down to 6.5 percent, banks are set for another round of deposit-rate slashing.

How can banks make these escalating charges and parsimonious payouts stick? Immobile consumers and declining competition. While financial deregulation encouraged a greater array of customer choices (beyond merely 5 percent on savings plus a toaster), the average consumer really can't compare the profusion of financial products being peddled by competing banks, ranging from C.D.s with rates tied to the stock market to five flavors of checking account at a single bank. Indeed, many consumers seem to regard their banks as they do their houses of worship—once a member, always a member.

The recent megamergers have further emboldened banks to tax consumers; because there is less competition, the banks are confident there will be little backlash. There were 15,000 banks in 1980; today there are about 12,500. By the end of the decade, most analysts predict some 4,000 to 6,000 more will be absorbed into existing institutions or closed down by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. This summer's spate of bank megamergers—BankAmerica and Security Pacific out West, C&S Sovran and NCNB in the South and Chemical and Manufacturers Hanover in New York—are the harbingers of a greatly consolidated financial system.

While the giant mergers made the headlines, they are only part of the story. Small community banks are combining or are being bought up by their big-city cousins, and existing regional banks such as Fleet/Norstar are evolving into superregionals.

Most industry analysts attribute the big mergers to the need to cut overhead drastically to survive. BankAmerica, for example, plans to save $1 billion annually by firing up to 15,000 workers. But occasional candid public comments by industry leaders reveal another, longer-term motivation: With fewer competitors banks are in a stronger position to dictate con-

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sumer interest rates. *Bank Rate Monitor* quoted Jerry Biuso, First Nationwide Bank's vice president for marketing: "I think that if this trend continues with big banks gobbling up lots of smaller banks and there are fewer players left, the pricing [deposit rate] is going to be reduced; there won't be as much competition."

American Banker reported that "analysts agree" that Wachovia Bank's takeover of South Carolina National "should realize major benefits over time from controlling a dominant market share in South Carolina." The "benefits," of course, are the banks', not the customers'. As Floyd Norris wrote in *The New York Times*'s "Market Watch" column, "The hope is that the new Chemical [Bank] will be able to cut costs by firing lots of tellers and moving out of unneeded branches, and that diminished competition will make it possible for everyone to gently push up the fees charged to individuals."

Such observations merely restate an elementary principle of competition: When the number of competitors goes down, prices go up. The application of this principle to the banking industry can be glimpsed in California, where banking is already concentrated among just a handful of institutions. *Bank Rate Monitor* reports that while California NOW accounts (checking with interest) pay less than anywhere in the country, Los Angeles and San Francisco banks charge the highest rates in the United States for credit cards, mortgages, personal loans and other consumer loans.

Since 1989, for example, BankAmerica has purchased nine failing savings institutions from the Resolution Trust Corporation in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, Idaho, Oregon and Washington. These takeovers were often quickly followed by service-fee hikes and deposit-rate cuts. And with the engorged BankAmerica soon to account for 40 percent of California's commercial banking deposits, not to mention a probable merger of the next biggest California banks, First Interstate and Wells Fargo, there is no obvious reprieve in sight for California's bank consumers. Robert Gnaizda of San Francisco's Public Advocates predicts that soon three banks will hold 93 percent of California's commercial deposits.

In a healthy competitive environment, it would be expected that some banks would try to undercut their competition by paying higher rates or charging lower fees. But mergers will make it harder for consumers to shop for better rates, and with the competitor across the street gone, a branch manager will think twice before adding peak-time tellers or Saturday hours.

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In fact, smaller banks increasingly tend to look to the large banks for pricing direction.

Bankers argue that the retail banking playing field includes nonbank competitors, like A.T.&T., which issues credit cards, or uninsured money-market mutual funds. But the vast majority of Americans still turn to one of the nation's 56,000 bank branches for checking accounts, home equity loans and, for that matter, credit cards. Few consumers can substitute a Merrill Lynch Cash Management Account for their bank checking account.

The bigger banks are worse for consumers because they generally charge more and pay less. The *Consumer Bank Scorecard*, issued annually by the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs, ranks banks on the basis of how much they charge for accounts and services and what they pay on deposit accounts. Every year, the *Scorecard* finds that big commercial banks are by far the costliest for consumers. The periodic surveys of California banks by San Francisco Consumer Action uncovered the same pattern. Indeed, the latest fifty-bank survey showed that California's four big commercial banks—BankAmerica, Security Pacific, Wells Fargo and First Interstate—coincidentally paid almost identical lower-than-average interest rates this summer on C.D.s, money-market-rate accounts and savings accounts. Their C.D. rates were the lowest in the state.

With rankings like these, it's not surprising that more than half of the respondents in a recent *American Banker* consumer poll agreed with the statement, "I prefer to do my banking at a smaller, local bank rather than at a larger bank." Still, with big banks' branches increasingly dominating the neighborhoods and shopping strips of the nation, and with only the bigger banks able to afford full-page newspaper ads and television advertising campaigns, small banks will find it harder to compete. BankAmerica will get away with its puny deposit rates because it will be everywhere, and convenience has been the number-one determinant of where Americans choose to bank.

The bigger-isn't-better principle applies particularly to poor urban neighborhoods. In New York City, the expanded Chemical Bank plans to close about seventy branches, although executives hasten to point out that only fourteen are in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. But these are the same neighborhoods that suffered disproportionately from two waves of bank closures in the 1980s. A fifth of bank branches in the Bronx have closed since 1978—most in poorer areas like the South Bronx—even though the population has remained stable. Chemical's recent closure of one South Bronx branch and the imminent closure of another will reduce the number of banks in that community to only six, compared with twelve in 1983.

In Brooklyn's low-income Bedford-Stuyvesant community there is one bank per 27,200 people, a ratio more than five times higher than the national average. The ratio will rise to 30,200 per bank after Chemical carries out its plan to close the neighborhood Manufacturers Hanover branch. The community is still feeling the effects of the F.D.I.C.'s November 1990 shutdown of Freedom National Bank, which had a branch there.

In low-income South Central Los Angeles, BankAmerica

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and Security Pacific now own a total of fifteen branches. David Takeshima, chief consultant to the California Assembly Banks Committee, believes that about half of these will close when the merger is consummated—not many when stacked up against the 300 to 400 branches the banks expect to close everywhere but potentially significant to a resident of the area shopping around for a home-improvement loan.

Some industry observers claim the United States is "overbanked," that we don't need all of the 56,000 bank branches. Tell that to the working-class residents of the nation's Bedford-Stuyvesants, who are turning increasingly to costly check-cashing storefronts for basic bank services and to pawnbrokers for loans. In South Central L.A., there are fifteen banks but 122 check-cashing outlets. There might be some validity to the "overbanked America" argument in the case of fast-growth Sunbelt suburbs, which did see hundreds of branches open in the 1980s. But overall, the United States has fewer bank branches per capita than France, Britain, Germany and several other developed countries.

What will Congress do about the increasing concentration of the consumer financial services industry? About branch closures in already underbanked areas? Probably very little.

After the Senate passed a credit card interest rate cap last November, the stock market fell 120 points; the effort quickly died. Last fall Senate Banking Committee chairman Donald Riegle introduced a measure to curb mergers by limiting banks' market share, but the proposed ceilings were very high—no bank was to have more than 30 percent of a state's deposits or 10 percent of the nation's. His reform also lacked crucial metropolitan-area caps. Even this mostly symbolic measure went down to defeat, however, after intense lobbying by the banking industry, according to Peggy Miller, banking lobbyist for the Consumer Federation of America.

Congress might actually make it *easier* for banks like BankAmerica and NationsBank to live up to their names by enacting the interstate branching portion of the Bush Administration's failed reform bill. One industry consultant has predicted that by allowing consolidation of operations instead of requiring separate businesses in each state, interstate branching would save banks $10 billion. It would also make these banks even more powerful and ubiquitous, with undesirable effects on competition.

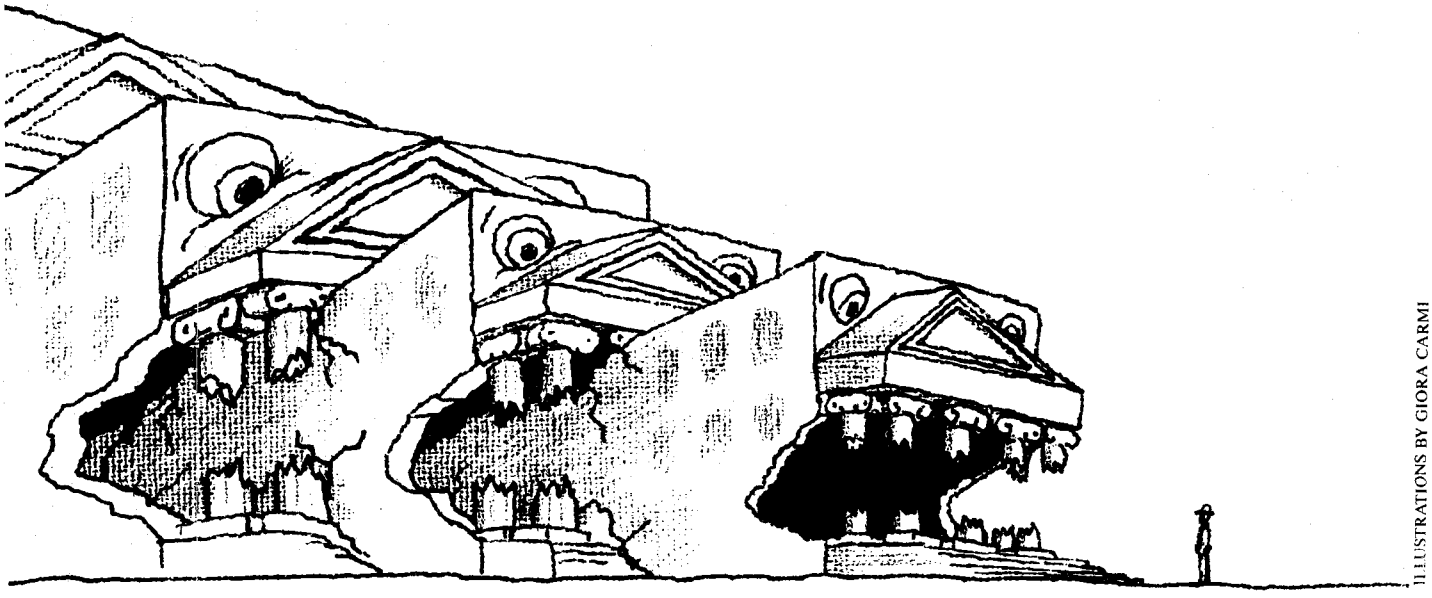
Meanwhile, the American Association of Retired People is promoting passage of a "lifeline" banking provision that would require banks to offer low-cost checking and savings accounts. It would help soften the impact on lower-income people of climbing service charges and should become part of a comprehensive restructuring package, if one ever passes Congress.

Why doesn't the Justice Department step into the breach? After all, antitrust standards of both the Clayton and Sherman acts do apply to banking. And a new study by the Southern Finance Project concludes that the BankAmerica-Security Pacific merger will produce commercial bank concentration levels surpassing the Justice Department's "highly concentrated" threshold in seventy-five of the ninety-nine counties where the two companies now compete in California, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, Nevada and Idaho.

When the recent spate of mergers started in earnest, it looked like Justice might take its own antitrust standards seriously. In March 1991 the department stopped a Hawaii merger and last summer insisted that Fleet/Norstar unload a few branches before taking over the Bank of New England.

But the Justice Department's mood seems to be growing more permissive. It will probably stamp "approved" on every one of the recent merger proposals. Why? Because of the way the department is defining "relevant market." So long as "relevant markets" are deemed regional or national and do not include local markets for, say, small-business loans, the department will merely nibble around the edges of the proposed consolidations.

One innovative approach to help communities left in the lurch after anticompetitive mergers is to create community-development credit unions in closed bank branches. These small, full-service institutions take deposits from and make loans principally in their surrounding communities. With



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community prodding, Manufacturers Hanover helped set up just such a credit union after it closed its branch on New York's low-income Lower East Side in 1985. Credit unions are not a panacea—they do let big banks off the hook—but they can provide a useful alternative to the surviving branches of the megabanks.

As the popularity of the credit card cap showed, consumers are becoming less willing to endure ever-higher fees and interest charges. A revolution is like waves lapping at a cliff, said French historian Henri Sée. For decades nothing seems to be going on, and then the cliff falls in. □

SUNDAYS, BLOODY SUNDAYS

Pro Football—The Maiming Game

JACOB WEISMAN

The Super Bowl, our national Circus Maximus, is upon us once again. But, alas, the tedious, two-week run-up to that organized mayhem on January 26 can leave the dedicated football fan fidgeting like a benched quarterback. Fortunately, football sells its violence in many ways. Several videos produced by the National Football League can help the aficionado fight withdrawal and keep his insanity while awaiting Super Bowl XXVI; these tapes include *The NFL's Greatest Hits*, *Thunder and Destruction* and *The NFL's Crunch Course*.

Crunch Course begins with the frozen image of Joe Theismann poised to throw. Beneath the Washington Redskins' former quarterback are these words from the late owner-coach, George Halas: "Pro football will always be a game of hitting." The frame unfreezes. Theismann lifts his arm to pass and is indeed hit, brought down from his blind side by Mike Davis, a blitzing safety on the Oakland Raiders. Next we see Ron Jaworski, of the Philadelphia Eagles, get leveled by a Chicago Bears defender. Again and again, quarterbacks, wide receivers and running backs get nailed. "It's like swinging a golf club," explains Sam Wyche, former head coach of the Cincinnati Bengals. "If the club is not reflexing at the right moment, you're not going to get quite the distance on the ball; but if you hit into a guy and uncoil at the right moment, you explode through him." Next we see Dick Butkus, a former linebacker for the Bears, sitting on the sidelines, hand bandaged, fingers dripping blood. Later, he stares into the camera and observes of the film *Hush Hush . . . Sweet Charlotte*, "I got kind of a charge when that head came rolling down the stairs."

Theismann fumbled the ball but survived his encounter with Mike Davis. However, in 1985 Lawrence Taylor of the New York Giants hit him with a savage tackle that broke his right leg and ended his career. That play isn't included in *Crunch Course*, but we do see lots of Taylor in other situations. Play after play, he is relentless: pushing aside blockers, spinning away from double teams, clawing his way toward the quarterback. At one point he taunts Eagles quarterback Randall Cunningham. "You mine, baby, you mine," he says, pointing. Later he tells a teammate, "Let's go out there like a bunch of crazed dogs and have some fun."

In 1905, before the days of protective padding and hard helmets, football was on the verge of being abolished after twenty-three deaths resulted from play that year. Instead, the forward pass and the ten-yard rule for first downs were introduced to open up the game, thus making it safer. The innovations may have worked to some extent in the leather helmet era, but they fall far short today. According to a 1989 study conducted by two Ball State University professors, Beverly Pitts and Mark Popovich, 66 percent of N.F.L. players who played after 1970 had some form of debilitating injury when they retired.

"It's not the exception, it's the rule," says Leigh Steinberg, an agent representing more than seventy players in the N.F.L. "Every player I represent is injured to some extent in every single game." Ten years ago, Steinberg represented three first-round draft choices. None are still in football. Kenny Easley suffered degenerative kidney damage, Curt Marsh had four back operations that have taken inches off his spine and Neil Lomax ended up having his hip replaced.

On November 24 Broderick Thomas, a linebacker with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, felled the Giants' Jeff Hostetler, fracturing three of the quarterback's vertebrae and putting him out for the rest of the season. Luckily, he suffered no neurological damage, as did Mike Utley the Sunday before. A Detroit Lions guard, the 6-feet-6-inch, 290-pound Utley landed on his head in a game against the Los Angeles Rams. "When he rolled over on the ground," said David Rocker, the rookie defensive tackle who had blocked Utley, "I saw his eyes moving but his body wasn't moving." Despite two and a half hours of surgery on a fractured sixth cervical vertebra and other spinal injuries, Utley, who is 26 years old, will be paralyzed from the chest down for the rest of his life. In 1977, Darryl Stingley was a 26-year-old wide receiver with the New England Patriots when he collided with Raiders safety Jack Tatum in an exhibition game. He has been a quadriplegic ever since.

The rare but dramatic injuries like Utley's and Stingley's obscure the long-range consequences of routine injuries in pro football. Len Teeuws, a former N.F.L. lineman and now an actuarial consultant in Indianapolis, surveyed 1,800 players who spent at least five years in the league between 1921 and 1959. He found that the life expectancy of this group was 62 years, 12 years below the national average for men. The most ambitious study of pro-football injuries and their consequences, commissioned by the N.F.L. Players Association and conducted by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, is due out in about a year.

"When you're young," says Charlie Krueger, a former nose tackle who played with the San Francisco 49ers, "you think the old guys are bullshitting you [when they talk about injuries], that they're making excuses for their own lack of inter-

Jacob Weisman is a freelance writer living in the San Francisco Bay Area.

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est in physical activity. But you just haven't been there. You don't know what pain and chronic disability are like." Krueger retired in 1973 following a fourteen-year N.F.L. career. Since then he's had his left knee replaced after repeated cortisone injections during his playing days (cortisone is an anti-inflammatory drug that can cause muscle wasting and destruction when used over a long period of time). Eventually, the knee will have to be fused, greatly reducing the pain but permanently straightening the leg. Such injuries are fairly common, especially for linemen. Jim Otto, former center for the Raiders who did not miss a game for fifteen years, has had five knee replacements since he retired in 1975.

Team physicians look the other way. Owners want their best players on the field despite their wounds.

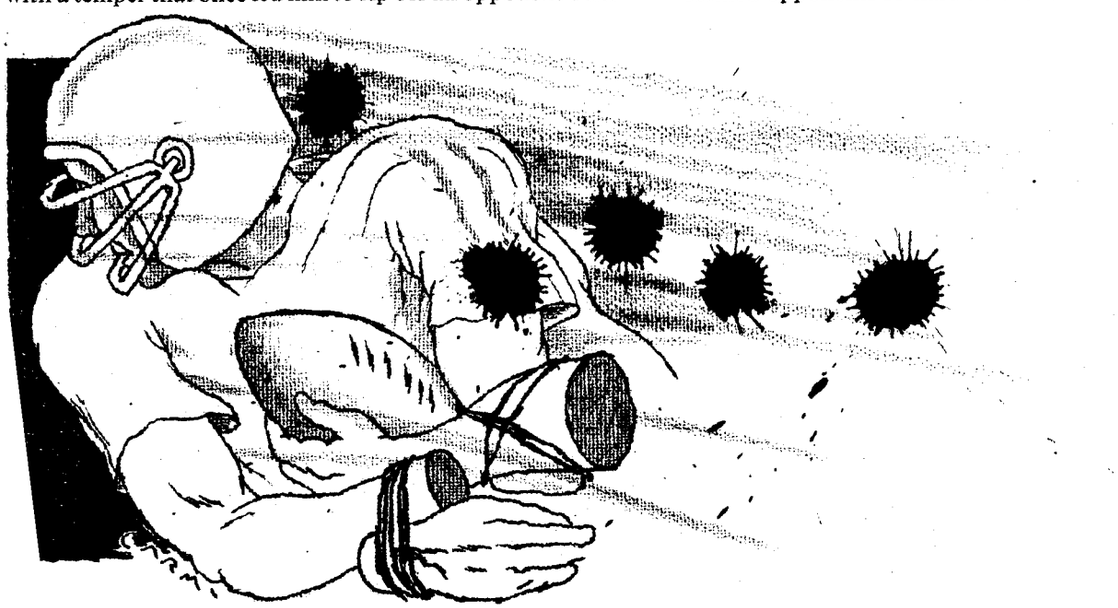
Players are taught early to be stoical, to play with pain. They take the field with broken ribs, sprained ankles, separated shoulders, even concussions. They sacrifice their bodies one piece at a time. Ronnie Lott, when playing with the 49ers, had the top part of the little finger on his left hand amputated rather than undergo the surgery that would have saved it—because he would have had to miss a month of the season. In 1986, Joe Montana, the 49ers All-Pro quarterback, ignored his doctor's advice and began playing again after an eight-week absence because of major back surgery to remove a ruptured disk and widen his spinal column. He threw three touchdown passes against the St. Louis Cardinals in his first game off the bench.

Lyle Alzado was a high school All-American, but it didn't take him long to realize that at 190 pounds he wasn't big enough to compete in college. He began taking steroids, which eventually built him into a 275-pound All-Pro defensive tackle with a temper that once led him to rip off an opponent's helmet and beat him with it. This "steroid rage" is just one of the many side effects of steroid abuse. Alzado believes that twenty years of steroid use, along with other forms of muscle enhancers, including human growth hormones, depressed his immune system and led to the brain tumor that may kill him in the coming months.

Most of the time, team physicians look the other way. Owners want their best players on the field despite their wounds if they can still play effectively. In 1976, Pat Toomay, a defensive end who played in two Super Bowls with the Dallas Cowboys, was traded to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, a weak expansion team, in its first season. "We were decimated by injuries," he says. "By the end of the season there were two guys in the defensive huddle who were there at the beginning. . . . According to Dallas standards, some of these injuries would have been considered marginal and the players would have been kept on the field. But the Tampa doctor was new; he hadn't yet been indoctrinated into the medical realities of the N.F.L. So he was practicing medicine conservatively, as he'd been taught it, which meant he had the best interests of his patients at heart rather than the owner's pocketbook." The next year the Buccaneers hired a new physician.

Many players feel that playing on the artificial turf that carpets fourteen of the playing fields in the twenty-eight-team N.F.L. increases their chances of serious injury. Charlie Krueger likens it to "playing in a parking lot. It was brutal. It hurts me when I watch players bouncing off that crap." Dr. John Powell, a member of the department of orthopedic surgery at the University of Iowa who keeps track of injuries for the N.F.L., says his research shows that playing on artificial turf is no more dangerous than on grass. But as Mickey Yaras, director of benefits for the Players Association, put it to *The New York Times* recently, "If you or me simply walks out and just falls on artificial turf as opposed to grass, which one hurts more?"

Players, once taught to bring an opponent down with their shoulders, are now taught to drive through an opponent with their helmets. "While at Baylor," writes Rick Telander in *The Hundred Yard Lie* (1989), "middle linebacker Mike Singletary tackled opponents so hard he broke sixteen helmets in four



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years. Do you know how hard it is to break a football helmet? Have you ever tried to shatter the hull of a motorboat with your fist? With your skull? . . . If you got a really sturdy helmet, you could toss it up in the air like a baseball, rear back, and wallop it with a 42-ounce Louisville Slugger and do it no damage."

Most professional players love the game, and the average salary of $427,000 a year goes a long way toward distracting them from the often crippling physical consequences they may have to deal with in only a few years, if not sooner. But once the cheering stops and the large salaries end, there is plenty of time for reflection, especially when sons decide to play football. In a high school game, Pat Toomay's son tackled an opponent and didn't get up after the play. Toomay ran out onto the field. His son couldn't move. "There I was," says Toomay, "riding in the ambulance with my son on the board in the back, possibly paralyzed. It was like a slap . . . a sledgehammer. He was out for about three hours." The teenager recovered. Marc Buoniconti, son of former Miami Dolphins linebacker Nick Buoniconti, was not so fortunate. He tackled an opponent in a college game in 1985 and has been partially paralyzed and confined to a wheelchair ever since.

Despite such cautionary tales, television continues to cater to the national bloodlust. Its latest innovation puts a video camera inside some helmets so that viewers feel as if they're in the middle of the play. As the quarterback drops back, we watch a wall of looming offensive linemen struggle to keep the equally gargantuan defense at bay. We turn with the quarterback in search of his wide receiver out in the flat. Suddenly, a defensive lineman comes crashing through. He rushes toward us, getting bigger and bigger until he fills all but the periphery of our vision. Then comes the jarring collision and the field tilts and rises and all we see is grass or artificial turf.

War imagery dominates football. Quarterbacks throw "aerial strikes" or "bombs" deep into "enemy territory" and have "cannons" for arms. Running backs built like "tanks" are "shielded" by blockers in the "trenches." Middle linebackers "blitz" the quarterback. Safeties "patrol" the middle of the field and function as "assassins." Football, of course, *is* modeled on war. It is a game based on gaining ground until an objective has been achieved. The taking of the end zone is tantamount to the taking of Troy.

Or vice versa. During the taking of Kuwait, war seemed suddenly to be modeled on football, at least in the language of military spokesmen. At briefings during the Gulf War, battle plans became game plans. Pilots describing how they felt before a mission said it was like being in the locker room before the big game. Footage of missiles hitting their targets was replayed again and again on the 11 o'clock news, like game-winning touchdown passes. At one briefing, Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf himself gave a chalk talk in which he described how he defeated the Iraqis with what he called the "Hail Mary," a dramatic play made famous by the Dallas Cowboys.

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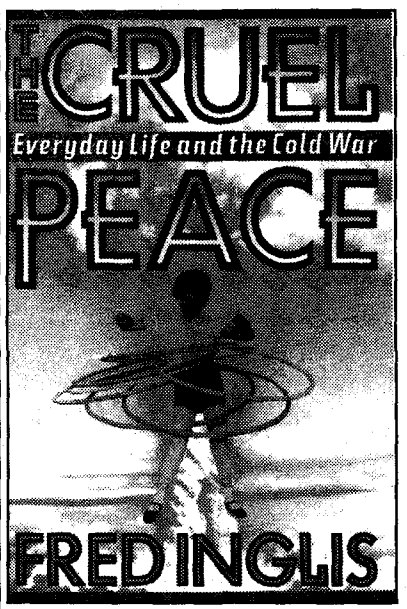

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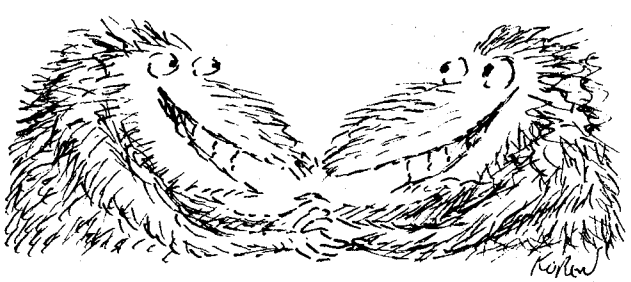

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People's Convention

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

mare runs true to course, in which case I did *not* graduate but have spent fifty dusty years trying, unsuccessfully, to make up a failed math test. Once awake, I found that my old friend déjà vu was back in town as a half-dozen hopeless presidential candidates were going through their quadrennial paces. In 1982 I had run against one of them, Jerry Brown, in California and lost a Senate primary election. Now he was making my old speeches. Should I warn him not to? No. Meanwhile, New Hampshire is in deep depression—shops out of business, banks failed, real estate belly-up, and everywhere the newly unemployed, looking for work where there is none.

From Dartmouth to Miami, and a firsthand look at the collapse of Pan American in its capital city. Local television devoted a great deal of time to the 7,500 workers suddenly let go, while stunned passengers crowded the ticket counters in order to read the scribbled message: "All Pan Am flights canceled"—forever. I thought of the arrogant Juan Trippe, who had founded the airline at about the same time that my father was founding what was to become T.W.A., now near bankruptcy. I am definitely dreaming, I decided, and drove on to Key West, which I had not seen since my last visit to Tennessee Williams, thirty years earlier. German and French families crowded Duval Street, taking advantage of the cheap (ever cheaper as I write) dollar. I felt like a ghost who has been granted a day's visit to the future. I split for limbo, my home city of Washington, D.C., where I was due to address the National Press Club.

The usual efforts (led this time by the ever-winsome Marianne Means) had been made to block my appearance but, as usual, they had failed. Apparently I am "outrageous," a word never exactly defined, though—from what I can tell—it appears to mean that as I say what I think about our political system and as I think a lot more about it than any of those journalists who are paid to present an irreal picture of these bad times, I cause a degree of outrage if not, as I would hope, rage.

This is the third time in thirty years that I have talked to the press club. Before me, my father addressed the club; before him, my grandfather. In a way, this is a family affair, but lately the family's hometown seems to have fallen apart. That morning I had strolled from the Willard Hotel toward the Capitol. Burnt-out buildings were just off Pennsylvania Avenue; burnt-out people were on the avenue—and elsewhere, too. It was like the spring of 1932, when jobless veterans of World War I marched by the thousands on the capital and set up a camp on the Anacostia Flats. They wanted a bonus. On June 17, I drove with my grandfather to the Senate. They stoned his car. Ever since, I have always known that the famous "it" which can't happen here will happen here, and last month as I walked through my home city, "it" seemed ever closer to hand, and we are now in a prerevolutionary time.

Gore Vidal's United States: Essays 1951–1991 *will be published by Random House this year.*

Hence, the emphasis in the media on the breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, or of anything other than the breakdown, if not breakup, of the United States and its economy. Just now, a month later, I watched on television as angry workers stormed through the streets of what I took to be Moscow until CNN identified the city as New York and the workers as members of one of our few labor unions—construction workers, I think, protesting lack of work, hope.

Like a ghost—but this time from the future—I tried to explain to the press club what it is they do that they don't know they do. I quote David Hume: The Few are able to control the Many only through Opinion. In the eighteenth century, Opinion was dispensed from pulpit and schoolroom. Now the media are in place to give us Opinion that has been manufactured in the boardrooms of those corporations—once national, now international—that control our lives.

In the process we lost the old Republic and its Constitution.

Naturally, this sounded to my audience like the old conspiracy theory. Later, I was asked if I actually thought that Kay Graham and Larry Tisch really told the news departments of *The Washington Post* and CBS what to tell us. I said, Yes, of course, they do on occasion, but in everyday practice they don't need to give instructions because everyone who works for them thinks exactly alike on those economic issues that truly matter. I even mentioned the unmentionable, the ruling class. I noted that those members who were not going to inherit money are sent like Bush to Andover and me to Exeter—two schools for the relatively brainy. Those who will inherit money (e.g., the late Nelson Rockefeller) go to Groton or St. Paul's, where, in order not to grow up to become dissolute wastrels, they will be taught useful hobbies, like stamp or people collecting. This sort of education insures that everyone so educated will tend to think alike. The few who break ranks are—what else?—outrageous. In any case, the indoctrination of the prep schools alone is usually quite enough to create a uniformity of ruling-class opinion when it comes to the rights of property. Since our corporate state is deeply democratic, there are always jobs available to middle-class careerists willing to play the game.

Almost forty years ago, I heard Secretary of State John Foster Dulles say that of course our foreign policy (as outlined in the then-secret National Security Council Memorandum 68) would lead to an arms race with the Soviet Union but that, as we were richer, they would cave in first. Dulles was right. They did. But he had not taken into account the economic cost to us or, worse, that in the process we would lose the old Republic and its Constitution, so revered by its current destroyers. Political decadence occurs when the forms that a state pretends to observe are known to be empty of all meaning. Who does not publicly worship the Constitution? Who, in practice, observes it at all? Congress has only two great powers under the Constitution: the power to declare war and

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the power of the purse. The first has been relinquished to the Executive; the second has drowned in a red sea.

The Supreme Court is no longer the Executive's equal. Rather, it is the Executive's tool. The White House's open coaching of the unqualified Clarence Thomas for a place on the Court made it dramatically clear that the Court now acts as a nine-member legal council to the Executive, its principal function the validation of Executive decrees. The current Court has also displayed a startling dislike of the American people, and the joy with which the nine nullities chop away at our Bill of Rights is a marvel to behold. But then the hatred of those *inside* the fabled Beltway for those *outside* has now—what else?—created a true hatred on the part of the Many for the Few who govern them, or appear to govern, since the actual decision makers—and paymasters—are beyond anyone's reach, out there in the boardrooms of the world.

The S&L bailout will cost $40 billion more than World War II.

In the absence of true political debate, we have what I think of as the Sunday zoo on television. Here journalists and politicians gaze at one another through the bars of received Opinion and chatter about "process," a near-meaningless word in these parts. Recently I watched Richard Darman, the budget director, gabble to Messrs. Evans and Novak about the deficit. To my amazement, the defense budget was actually mentioned by Evans. Apparently the Brookings Institution had daringly suggested that if a few hundred dollars were cut, we would still be able to support with our swift nuclear sword the "democracy" of Tonga. But although the defense budget continues to be the cancer that is killing our body politic, it may not be dealt with at any length by the media, and Darman was swift to create the necessary diversion: "Entitlements!" he moaned right on cue. "If only we could get *them* on the table." He shook his head in despair at the trillions of dollars that we waste on free dentures and on the financing in luxury of profligate unwed mothers.

Now it is wonderfully ironic for anyone to complain about what the zoo calls "people programs" because, wasteful or not, there aren't many. But no one can point this out on television because both journalists and politicians are hired by the same people and behind those people is the corporate wealth of the country, which requires that the budget be faked. The famous entitlements consist largely of disbursements for Social Security, and although Social Security contributions are always counted as part of the federal revenue, they are not. Social Security is a separate trust fund whose income and outgo have *nothing* to do with the actual budget. So why does the government like to pretend that Social Security payments are part of its annual revenue? Because if you take those payments *out* of the budget, everyone would realize that perhaps three-quarters or more of the federal income, over the years, has been spent on "defense" or war-related matters or on servicing the debt on money borrowed for war. Recent bulletin from Governor Bill Clinton: In 1990, for the first time, the cost of servicing the debt was equal to the amount of money appropriated for the Pentagon proper.

If Social Security payments are not counted as revenue, Bush is currently spending $1.1 trillion a year, while taking in only $726 billion from taxes. The real national debt is about $4 trillion; in 1980 it was a mere $1 trillion. It is true that the Pentagon itself gets less money these days than it used to, but debt service, foreign aid, nuclear energy and payments to the true victims of our wars, the veterans, still account for most federal expenditures and deficits.

From time to time it is shyly suggested that taxes be raised—for individuals but never for corporations. To those who maintain that our political life is not controlled by corporations, let me offer a statistical proof of ownership—the smoking gun, in fact. In 1950, 44 percent of federal revenues came from individual taxpayers and 28 percent from a tax on corporate profits. Today, 37 percent comes from individuals and only 8 percent from the corporations [see John McDermott, "The Secret History of the Deficit," August 21/28, 1982]. Once Bush's only fiscal notion becomes law and the capital gains tax is eliminated, the work of corporate America will be complete, and the ownership will have ceased to support the United States. Naturally, should a badly run company like Chrysler go bust, the American people will be expected to pay for managerial mistakes. In any case, let it be solemnly noted that during the forty years of the national security state, corporate America not only collected most of the federal revenue for "defense" but, in the process, reduced its share of federal taxes by twenty percentage points. Was this a conspiracy? No. They all think alike. Yes. They all think alike.

Since it is unlikely that Japan and Germany will continue to buy our Treasury bonds, how will the ownership pay for itself? Well, we could always renege on servicing the debt, but as Richard Nixon would say, *that would be the easy way* (and will, alas, be taken). The sublime way, which will be taken by the next administration, will be to sell off that 31 percent of the United States that is held by the federal government in our name. This fire sale will be highly popular with the buyers but it will be odd for Americans to have so little real estate to call their own.

When I was at the press club three years ago Opinion makers were mildly interested in overruns at the Defense Department. There was to be an investigation, and John Tower would be in place to make sure that nothing untoward was discovered. But Dick Cheney got the job instead, and there have been no meaningful investigations on his watch.

Meanwhile, the much discussed savings and loan "bailout is not possible. In current dollars and including service connected veteran benefits, the cost of World War II about $460 billion. The estimated cost of bailing out the will be at least $500 billion. So, as *The Wall Street Journ* recently noted, the S&L bailout will cost $40 billion more than World War II. As for the state of the banks . . . well, it would appear that we have been robbed.

It is a commonplace that half of those qualified to vote for President don't vote; also, that half the adult population never read a newspaper. No bad thing, all in all, assuming that they

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could read a newspaper, which is moot as our public schools are among the worst in the First World while our prison population, symmetrically, is the highest, surpassing at last South Africa and the *ci-devant* Soviet Union. Naturally, we lead the First World in the execution of criminals or "criminals."

Every four years the naïve half who vote are encouraged to believe that if we can elect a really nice man or woman President everything will be all right. But it won't be. Any individual who is able to raise $25 million to be considered presidential is not going to be much use to the people at large. He will represent oil, or aerospace, or banking, or whatever moneyed entities are paying for him. Certainly he will never represent the people of the country, and they know it. Hence, the sense of despair throughout the land as incomes fall, businesses fail and there is no redress.

Before the national security state was invented, we had something called "representative government." It did not work awfully well but at least there was some sense that, from time to time, something might be done about a depression—the sort of thing that cannot be done by a system in which most public revenues are earmarked for weaponry and war and secret police forces and, of course, the servicing of trillions of dollars' worth of debt.

"When we suffer, or are exposed to the same miseries *by a government*, which we might expect in a country *without government*, our calamities is [*sic*] heightened by reflecting that we furnish the means by which we suffer. Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence; the palaces of kings are built on the ruins of the bowers of paradise." I quote from *Common Sense*, by Thomas Paine. How do we get rid of this bad government? There is certainly no road back to Eden in any society. Even if we could return, our own Eden was a most serpentine affair, based as it was on the enslavement of Africans and the slaughter and deportation of an indigenous population.

But until 1950, when our ramshackle world empire was institutionalized as the national security state, we *were* improving ourselves, and the generality took part in government while Opinion was not so cynically and totally manipulated as now. Since we cannot pay for the empire any longer, we shall soon be coming home—but to what? Our "inalienable" rights are being systematically alienated. Never has an American government been so busy interfering with the private lives of its citizens, subjecting them to mandatory blood, urine, lie-detector tests. Yet the war on drugs has nothing at all to do with drugs. It is part of an all-out war on the American people by a government interested only in control. As this grows more evident, I suspect that we shall begin to see an organized resistance to so tyrannous a state. Meanwhile, as we have neither political parties nor, indeed, politics, only issueless elections, I see only one peaceful way out of this corpse of a Republic, this literally bankrupt national security state.

Article Five of the Constitution describes two methods whereby it may be amended or otherwise altered. One way, and so far the only way yet taken, is by a vote of two-thirds of both houses of Congress. The amendment is then sent for ratification by the state legislatures. The *second* procedure is

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ACKERMAN
ACKERS
ACTON
ADAIR
ADAM(S)
ADKINS
AGAR
AGER
AGNEW
AIKEN(S)
AINSWORTH
AITKEN
AKERS
ALBERT(S)
ALBRECHT
ALBRIGHT
ALDEN
ALDERMAN
ALDERSON
ALDRICH
ALDRIDGE
ALEXANDER
ALFORD
ALGER
ALLAN
ALLEN
ALLISON
ALLMAN
ALSOP
ALSTON
ALVORD
AMANN
AMBLER
AMBROSE
AMES
AMMANN
AMOS
ANDERSON
ANDREW(S)
ANGEL(L)
ANTHONY
ANTRIM
APPLEBY
APPLEGATE
APPLETON
ARCHER
ARCH(I)BALD
ARM(I)STEAD
ARMITAGE
ARMSTRONG
ARNDT
ARNETT
ARNOLD
ARNOTT
ARROWSMITH
ARTHUR
ASBURY
ASHBY
ASH(E)
ASHLEY
ASHTON
ASTON
ATCHISON
ATHERTON
ATKINS
ATKINSON
ATWATER
ATWELL
ATWOOD
AUBR(E)Y
AUSTIN
AVERELL
AVERILL
AVERY
AXTELL
AYER(S)
AYRES
BABBITT
BABCOCK
BACH(E)
BACHMAN(N)
BACON
BADGER
BADGLEY
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BAGGETT
BAGGOTT
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BAGWELL
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CRAWFORD
CRAWLEY
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CREIGHTON
CRENSHAW
CRES(S)WELL
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CROCKER
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CROZIER
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CUMMIN(G)S
CUNNINGHAM
CURL(E)(S)
CURRIE
CURRIER
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CURTIS
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DRIVER
DRUMMOND
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DRYDEN
DUBOIS
DUCKWORTH
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HUSBAND(S)
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HUTCHE(R)SON
HUTCHIN(G)S
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INGERSOLL
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ISAAC(S)
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JACKMAN
JACK(S)
JACKSON
JACOB(S)
JACQUES
JAE(GER
JAMES
JAM(I)E)SON
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JEFF(E)RIES
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M(A)CARTHUR
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MERCIER
MEREDITH
MER(R)IAM
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METCALF(E)
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RADCLIFF(E)
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SAM(P)SON
SAMUEL(S)
SANBORN
SANDERSON
SAND(S)
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SATTERLEE
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SAUNDERS
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SAWYER
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SAXTON
SAYER(S)
SAYLES
SAYRE
SCALES
SCARB(O)ROUGH
SCARLETT
SCHAEF(F)EK
SC(H)ELL
SCHEN(C)K
S(C)HERER
SCHMID(T)
SCHMIT(T)
SCHNEIDER
SC(H)OFIELD
SCHOOLEY
SCHOTT
SCHRADER
SCHRECK
SCHRO(E)DER
SCHROETER
SCHUBERT
SC(H)ULER
S(C)HULTZ
SCHUMACHER
SCHUMAN(N)
SCHUSTER
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very interesting indeed—in fact, one might almost call it democratic.

Two-thirds of the state legislatures can request a constitutional convention, which Congress must then convene. Unlike us, the founders did not worship their handiwork. Many thought the original Constitution was bound to fail. Thomas Jefferson wanted to hold a constitutional convention at least once a generation because, as he said, you cannot expect a man to wear a boy's jacket. As it turned out, the jacket has been so reshaped over the past two centuries that it is now a straitjacket for the people at large and satisfying to no one except those who gain election—and profits—from a most peculiar institution.

In recent years there have been several movements to convene a constitutional convention. These efforts have been the work of single-interest groups usually on the far right. One group wants to forbid abortion to every woman. Another wants a balanced budget embedded in the Constitution. What *is* interesting is that in the 1970s and 1980s thirty-two state legislatures voted in favor of such a convention; but many of them cautiously noted that no subject other than a balanced budget, say, could be discussed.

In 1967, Senator Sam Ervin was so intrigued by Article Five that he thoroughly researched the subject and explained the mechanics of such a convention in S.2307. He came to the conclusion that, as *We the People* are the true de jure sovereign of these states, *We the People* cannot be held by anyone to any single issue once *we* convene *our* convention. If we so choose, the entire Constitution could be rewritten. At this point I part company with the American Civil Liberties Union, who, for once, are more pessimistic about the people than I. The first thing *they* will get rid of is the Bill of Rights, the liberals moan. To which the answer is, first, I don't think the people are suicidal and, second, what is the difference between losing those rights at an open convention as opposed to a gradual loss of them behind the closed doors of the current Supreme Court?

It is true that we are a less homogeneous and less educated people than the 3 million original inhabitants of the thirteen colonies. But I cannot believe that our convention would do away with our liberties while granting more power, say, to the Executive to fight wars that in the end harm only *us*. I am aware that the people at large have been kept ignorant by bad schools and by the dispensers of false Opinion. That is true. That is a problem. But ignorance is not stupidity. And self-interest, as both Hamilton and Madison agreed, is a great motor to the state, properly checked and balanced.

In any case, we are now faced with the fury of those who have been deprived for too long of decent lives. It takes no unusual power of prophecy to remark that they will not be apathetic forever. "If it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all." Rather than be *un*ready for anarchy, I submit that we must sit down and in an orderly way rethink our entire government as well as our place in the world.

The founders' last gift to us is the machinery to set things right. Article Five. Let us use it.

Thus, I ended my speech to the National Press Club—outrageously, of course. □

EDITORIALS.

(*Continued From Page 77*)

purposes. All spending is lumped together into one meaningless and frightening figure called thedeficit. Is there any wonder that the word strikes terror in the hearts of all?

Why doesn't the government break down its spending into investment and regular expenses, the way businesses do? Why doesn't Congress establish a capital budget with an explicit borrowing authorization, the way boards of directors do? Why doesn't the Administration urge a budget that would enable voters to understand clearly what we are borrowing for?

No doubt there are "answers" to these questions. A capital budget would tempt many in Congress to put their favorite projects into the capital hopper. Great battles would be fought to classify all manner of projects as "capital," so that we could cover their costs by borrowing and not by taxes. But there are also ways around those problems. A nonpartisan, nonpolitical committee of oversight could have the power to reject poorly chosen projects from the capital budget. Total capital spending could be limited to some fixed proportion of public expenditure. A proportion of one-quarter for the coming fiscal year would authorize us to borrow roughly $350 billion to spend on infrastructure, including education. Thedeficit would be the same, but we would know that all of it was used to promote growth.

So this is not a proposal to open the floodgates of indiscriminate government spending. On the contrary, it is an attempt to allow citizens, for the first time, to see what their government is borrowing for. It is not a proposal that will give us economic recovery overnight. It will take time before a strengthened infrastructure exerts its effects on private productivity and even more time before an education program can pay off in a better-trained labor force.

What getting rid of thedeficit will do overnight is to remove an obstacle that today makes any kind of sensible policy impossible. A capital budget is neither a liberal nor a conservative proposal, merely a common-sensical one. Looking at the climate in Washington today, I am inclined to think that may be its most unacceptable feature. ROBERT HEILBRONER

Robert Heilbroner is professor of economics at The New School. His most recent book is Behind the Veil of Economics *(Norton).*

STAFF NOTES

The Nation's film critic, Stuart Klawans, has been appointed a member of the selection committee of the New York Film Festival by the Film Society of Lincoln Center.

We belatedly welcome back to the masthead Katha Pollitt as associate editor. Katha previously served as literary editor and is a frequent contributor to our pages.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

An Old-Left Adam

DON BOGEN

CANTO GENERAL. *By Pablo Neruda. Translated by Jack Schmitt. University of California. 407 pp. $35.*

SELECTED ODES OF PABLO NERUDA. *Translated by Margaret Sayers Peden. University of California. 375 pp. $40. Paper $12.95.*

Pity the poets of the New World. If Columbus et al. merely had to subdue the native flora and fauna long enough to set up shop here, the poets had to describe it all. They were stuck with the languages of the Old World—English, Spanish, French, Portuguese—but the literary traditions made about as much sense as a court ball at a trading post. No wonder many of them fell back on the hoariest text of all, the Bible, for a sense of the poet's role. The myth of Adam naming the creatures in the Garden was perfect for a world their languages had not yet touched. Not only did it simplify the task—if you don't know what to call this plant, river or group of people, make it up—it gave the poet a combination of innocence and importance that was hard to resist. In this country that vision ended with the closing of the frontier—Walt Whitman is the last successful exemplar—but it survived longer in Latin America. Describing South America in an interview published in Robert Bly's *Neruda and Vallejo: Selected Poems* (Beacon, 1971), Pablo Neruda noted "rivers which have no names, trees which nobody knows, and birds which nobody has described. . . . Everything we know is new." The poet's task, as he put it, is "to embrace the world around you, to discover the new world."

The Adamic poet, like his namesake, has a problem: If everything is new and you're the only one who determines what's what, how do you keep your pride at bay, and how do you know when to stop? Both Whitman and Neruda had enormous egos, and neither showed much restraint in output. Because Neruda wrote so much, including weak poems in almost all his more than forty books, it's advisable to start reading him in an edition of selected poems. The best of these, with translations by Anthony Kerrigan, W.S. Merwin, Alastair Reid and Nathaniel Tarn, has recently been reissued by Houghton Mifflin. The two new translations published by the University of California Press, Jack Schmitt's version of *Canto General* and Margaret Sayers Peden's *Selected Odes of Pablo Neruda*, provide a closer look at the poet's work of the 1940s and 1950s—both its glories and its excesses. This was a pivotal period for Neruda—the culmination of one phase of his career and the beginning of another—and these books are important additions to the body of work available in English translation.

On one level, all the poems in Canto General *are exhibits in a vast historical trial.*

With Neruda it's impossible to separate the poetry from the life. Both are huge, protean in their variety and ultimately political. Neruda, of course, has a sentimental appeal for anyone on the left. His commitment to the socialist cause and his death in the wake of the U.S.-sponsored Chilean coup can make him seem a literary martyr. But Neruda is more complex than this. While a single presence—expansive, passionate, directly personal—lies behind all his work, his career is marked by distinct changes in style and focus. The Adamic voice and political awareness we associate with him today are not strong elements in his early work. The volume that made him famous at 20, *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair* (1924), is a hybrid of French Symbolist yearning for the ineffable, and earthy Latin American eroticism. In the two major books that followed, *Residence on Earth I* (1933) and *II* (1935), Neruda turned from a young love poet into a surrealist, capturing the alienation he felt as a diplomat in the Far East in bleak monologues with long, fluid lines and torrents of imagery. The end of this period of surreal despair came in the mid-thirties when Neruda was serving in the Chilean Embassy in Madrid. His firsthand encounter with fascism during the Spanish Civil War solidified the basic commitment to the left that infuses all his subsequent work. In 1945 he was elected senator in the Chilean legislature; that same year he joined the Communist Party.

Canto General (1950) is the flowering of Neruda's new political stance. This epic collection traces the history of Latin America from before the arrival of human beings, through pre-Columbian times, colonization, liberation from the European powers, and the Yankee imperialism of the twentieth century. Much of it was written while the poet was on the run from the dictator Gabriel González Videla; Neruda escaped into exile in 1949. When he returned to Chile after González Videla's government fell, Neruda transformed his poetry yet again, developing a short-lined, deliberately "simple" mode of looking at everyday things in three volumes of *Elemental Odes* (1954-57). Though he wrote in a variety of styles after the odes, there is a general unity of tone in the poems of his last twenty years. The confidence and openness of this work reflect the richness of the poet's life: his travels all over the world; his broad recognition, capped by the Nobel Prize in 1971; his wealth of friends, including Salvador Allende, who named him Ambassador to France; his domestic life at homes in Santiago, Valparaiso and the coastal village of Isla Negra, where Neruda had a rambling house full of everything he had collected over the years. The autumnal abundance of this period ended with Pinochet's seizure of power in 1973. Gravely ill with cancer, Neruda survived for eleven days after the coup, chronicling in his memoirs the murder of Allende and the destruction of the country he loved. After his death, soldiers ransacked his houses.

Written when Neruda was in his 40s, *Canto General* stands at the center of the poet's life and work. Jack Schmitt's translation—the first complete English version—gives us Neruda at his most Adamic and most overtly political. In this collection the poet's task is not only to name the geographic features and forms of life in Latin America but to examine this garden after the Fall, as it moves

Don Bogen is the author of a book of poetry, After the Splendid Display *(Wesleyan University), and* A Necessary Order: Theodore Roethke and the Writing Process *(Ohio University).*

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through history in the flawed human world of hope and exploitation. *Canto General* is a huge work, including some 300 poems collected in fifteen sections. The first half of the book is broadly chronological, with five sections extending from pre-Columbian times to the year before the book was published. The second half is a group of ten varied sections tracing Neruda's encounters with nature, recent history, people and himself. The kinds of work Neruda brings together in *Canto General*—verse letters to friends, satiric blasts, lists, chronicles, elegies, descriptions, autobiographical musings, exhortations, lyric interludes—show his astounding poetic fertility. What unifies this diverse material is his focus on the question of justice. On one level, all the poems are exhibits in a vast historical trial.

The main defendant in this trial is González Videla, the leftist turned reactionary who ordered Neruda's arrest after the poet denounced him in 1948. A triggering device for the poet's rage, González Videla gets more attention than other dictators in the book, but finally he is seen as just another lackey of twentieth-century imperialism, one of many Neruda attacks in the fifth section of *Canto General*, "The Sand Betrayed." Our old friends Trujillo and Somoza crop up in this group of "voracious hyenas," as Neruda calls them. Their brutality in the service of corporations like Standard Oil, the United Fruit Company and Anaconda Copper (each given its own skewering) echoes that of the conquistadors Neruda describes in the third section of his epic: the same pretext of respectability; the same official blessings, from U.S. presidents now rather than bishops; the same cruelty toward the populace; the same underlying drive for power and wealth. As Neruda traces the history of Latin America in the first half of *Canto General*, he sets up a basic alternating pattern of a just world and its destruction. The pre-Columbian harmony of people and nature celebrated in the beautiful opening section, "A Lamp on Earth," is shattered by the European conquerors, then partially restored in a new form by the nineteenth-century liberators, then lost again in the neocolonialism of our time.

This pattern is fairly accurate, but it does raise two problems for the poet. The most obvious is repetition: Neruda's exhaustive catalogue of conquistadors, liberators and twentieth-century *caudillos* can at times become exhausting. The villains in particular tend to blur into one mass—which is obviously part of Neruda's point but nonetheless somewhat soporific. Some of my reaction may stem from general gringo ignorance of the intricacies of Latin American history—I confess I perked up when I saw Harry Truman come in for it in "Puerto Rico" or read about "Wall Street heroes" in "Sandino (1926)." Nonetheless, there are so many narratives of conquest and betrayal in the first 200 pages of *Canto General* that the various atrocities can begin to lose their punch. Neruda's tendency to slip into purple passages in some of the longer poems adds to this overstuffed quality.

The second problem is simplification. Again, Neruda's basic point *is* simple—there are good guys and bad guys in the history of Latin America—but sometimes the language is not lively enough to flesh out particular virtues and vices, and the figures end up as stereotypes. This happens most often when the poet is telling a story—narrative is generally the weakest element in *Canto General*. When Neruda abandoned his melancholy surrealism of the 1930s for the politically committed work that was to follow, he gave up some of the surprise and complexity that his plunges into the irrational had provided. Straight historical narrative doesn't always give him the oomph he needs to get his characters off the page. Fortunately, Neruda's restless technical inventiveness leads him to do more than just recount incidents, and many poems bring figures to life in bursts of sheer poetic energy, like the wacky run-on ironies at the start of "Miranda Dies in the Fog (1816)"—

> If you enter Europe late dressed in top hat
> in the garden decorated
> by more than one Autumn beside
> the marble fountain while leaves
> of tattered gold fall on the Empire—

or the pounding list of accomplishments that defines the Araucanian Indian leader Lautaro in "The Chief's Training":

> He drank wild blood on the trails.
> He wrested treasure from the waves.
> He loomed like a menacing god.
> He ate in every kitchen of his people.
> He learned the lightning's alphabet.
> He scented out the scattered ashes.
> He cloaked his heart with black furs.
> He deciphered the smoke's spiraling plume.

Neruda's masterpiece in *Canto General* is its second section, "The Heights of Macchu Picchu." In this exquisitely paced group of a dozen poems occasioned by his visit to the ruins of the Inca citadel in 1943, Neruda finds the heart of his vision. Beginning the sequence in alienated wandering "from air to air, like an/empty net," he concludes in a convincing solidarity with nameless exploited workers throughout history—"Juan Stonecutter," "Juan Coldeater," "Juan Barefoot"—who will "speak through my words and my blood." The Adamic impulse here is fundamentally political, a matter of standing up for those whom history has buried, of naming *crimes*. The city of Macchu Picchu is central to the sequence, but not in the ways we might expect. Neruda doesn't praise it as a symbol of pre-Columbian grandeur or even as a prototype of state socialism. Rather, the ruins serve as a locus for questions about basic human activities: work, survival in nature, community life. The stark majesty of this "towering reef of the human dawn" leads Neruda back to find its origins in punishing labor enforced by hunger and cold:

> Macchu Picchu, did you put
> stone upon stone and, at the base,
> tatters?
> Coal upon coal and, at the bottom,
> tears?

The deserted city has become "a life of stone after so many lives." In his struggle to name those lives and define their meaning, Neruda develops a profound meditation on the glory and horror of human achievement.

Moving away from the history of Latin America, the last ten sections of *Canto General* are more personal in their approach. We see more of Neruda's life in the second half: his relations with friends in the rambling letter poems of "The Rivers of Song"; his years as a senator from the poor mining provinces of northern Chile in "The Flowers of Punitaqui"; and his days underground in "The Fugitive," which includes one of his finest descriptive passages in this evocation of a poor quarter of Valparaiso:

> the high hills brimming
> with lives, doors painted
> turquoise, scarlet and pink,
> toothless steps,
> clusters of poor doors,
> dilapidated dwellings,
> fog, mist extending its
> nets of salt over things,
> desperate trees
> clinging to the ravines,
> clothes hanging from the arms
> of inhuman hovels,
> the hoarse whistle, abrupt

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creature of the vessels,
the sound of brine,
of the fog, the sea voice,
made of strokes and murmurs.

It's not just the eye for sensory detail and the wealth of metaphor that dazzle here—readers of Neruda come to take these for granted—but the careful modulation that braids together houses, hills and sea fog as the images wind down the page. Topography, weather, social and economic conditions—Neruda catches the very texture of life in this district.

Other sections are less autobiographical, like Neruda's hymn and warning to the United States, "Let the Woodcutter Awaken," or the dramatic monologues of "The Earth's Name Is Juan," a poetic documentary on the struggles of Chilean workers. In "America, I Do Not Invoke Your Name in Vain," Neruda takes on what might seem an unlikely mode for such an expansive poet: the lyric glimpse of one moment. Averaging a dozen short lines and often just one sentence long, these poems include some of the book's most haunting endings, as in "Youth"—"all adolescence becoming wet and burning/like a lantern tipped in the rain"—or "Hunger in the South":

and just the winter cough, a horse
moving through black water, where a
eucalyptus
leaf has fallen like a dead knife.

The last two sections of *Canto General* wrap up Neruda's vast project with meditations on nature and death in "The Great Ocean" and a final grounding of his political vision in personal experience in "I Am." Nothing in Neruda is neat, but these two final units give a sense of closure like that in one of the bulkier Dickens novels: a kind of summary and goodbye that leaves you with a huge social canvas—eccentric, flawed in spots, but rich with imagination and human sympathy.

The sheer heft of *Canto General* makes me admire Jack Schmitt for his diligence. The literalness of his translation is both its virtue and its limit. While you never feel the need to have the Spanish on facing pages to check if Neruda really said that, Schmitt's texts don't always work well as poems in English. He has a tendency to rely on Latinate cognates, lending a certain abstract quality to the work, as in the opening lines of "The Great Ocean":

Ocean, if I could destine my hands a
measure, a
fruit, a ferment
of your gifts and destructions,
I'd choose your distant repose, your
steely lines,
your extension guarded by air and
night.

In translations from Romance languages the choice of whether to use a cognate or a different word that would avoid abstract overtones is a judgment call on any given line, but Schmitt's general procedure gives us a fairly Latinate and hence somewhat less physical Neruda. Great translations of a body of poetry—Richard Howard's Baudelaire, for example, or Stephen Mitchell's Rilke—reflect not only an affinity between translator and poet but a distinctive mastery of the original text, a transformation of the work into the translator's personal idiom. I wish Schmitt had seized Neruda in this way a little more. Though more accurate on a literal level, his translation of "The Heights of Macchu Picchu" lacks some of the flamboyant energy of Nathaniel Tarn's; and his versions of "Gold," "The Ships" and other individual poems are less lyrical than Anthony Kerrigan's. But Schmitt has produced a consistent, readable version of the entire *Canto General*, and this is a major achievement.

Margaret Sayers Peden's task is less monumental than Jack Schmitt's. Her *Selected Odes of Pablo Neruda* translates sixty-seven of the nearly 200 "elemental odes" Neruda collected in three major books of the 1950s. I suspect anyone familiar with the odes will find that Sayers Peden has left out a few favorites. I'd love to see a version of "Ode to the Potato," for instance, with its effortless movement from names for the food (South American *papa* versus Castilian *patata*), through its role in history, to the way it sings in a frying pan; or "Ode to Copper," which shows the human dimension behind the schoolbook concept of "natural resources." But Sayers Peden's collection is nonetheless rich and representative. Her translations bring out the sensuous quality of Neruda's odes well; there is little of the Latinate or abstract here. Neruda's distinctive tone in these poems—casual, self-conscious but direct, musing yet open to passion—is captured with great sensitivity. My only quibble is with Sayers Peden's enjambment. In these short-lined poems Neruda will occasionally use the line break to separate an article from a noun or a preposition from its phrase. But the translation does this about twice as often as the original, and the effect is to make some poems a bit less fluid in

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WILLIAM A. GALSTON

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their movement than they might be.

After the bulk and stridency of *Canto General*, the odes give an immediate impression of ease. The drive to document oppression that pushes out the fairly blocky lines of *Canto General* and the fierce rhetoric that often accompanies it are replaced by skinny texts that lope down the page: speculative, funny at times, seemingly open to anything. The Adamic impulse has modulated. The odes are as expansive as *Canto General*, but Neruda is naming material things now rather than patterns in history. Instead of reaching for the "general" or universal, he turns to the basic, the "elemental." These poems have their designs on the reader—what work doesn't?—but they are deliberately user-friendly. As he puts it in "The House of Odes":

I want everything
to have
a handle,
I want everything to be
a cup or a tool.
I want people to enter a hardware
store through the door of my odes.

Neruda's hardware store is not one of those spread-out franchises in a shopping plaza but the mom-and-pop operation squeezed into an urban lot that just happens to have everything you might ever need. And Neruda walks along with you as you browse, pointing out this and that, telling anecdotes, passing along a broad enthusiasm for everything that catches his eye. This is lively, accessible poetry. The odes combine a detailed specificity with an encyclopedic range of subjects: artichokes, atoms, chestnuts, his clothes—in the Spanish books Neruda even arranges them alphabetically. The danger in such abundance, of course, is prolixity. Neruda published three volumes of odes between 1954 and 1957, and the third collection shows him starting to run out of steam, with more passages that seem pulled directly from mere journal entries, more random meditations. And while the open-ended quality of these poems gives a sense of freedom and the possibility of surprise, the later odes occasionally fall back on vague moralizing to wrap things up, as at the end of "Ode to the Gentle Bricklayer": "Ah, what a lesson/I learned/from the gentle bricklayer!"

If there are a few duds in Sayers Peden's selection, her book also contains some of the best poems Neruda ever wrote. The ode format and the proposition of celebrating all elemental things clearly invigorated his work after the completion of *Canto General*. "Ode to a Watch in the Night" is among his most sensuous love poems, with a hushed richness of sound in both original and translation:

A leaf falls,
a droplet
on the ground
deadens the sound,
the forest sleeps, waters,
meadows,
bells,
eyes.

The pacing here and in other odes is masterful. Lines this short could easily ossify into predictability, but Neruda keeps them flexible by varying the line breaks and the syntax of phrases that run over them. At times his movement is light and rapid, a half-dozen lines for a single phrase. "Ode to Summer," "Ode to My Socks" and others take a kind of glee in this. Insouciant, almost occasional, they romp down the page. Elsewhere there's a more deliberate pace as Neruda keeps a single object in view, naming it with image after image. In "Ode to the Cranium" he describes his skull after a fall as "the one thing/sound as a walnut," invoking it in a list of metaphors:

boned
tower of thought,
tough coconut,
calcium dome
protecting
the clockworks,
thick wall
guarding
treasures infinitesimal.

The combination of delight in abundance, curiosity and bemused self-mockery is typical of Neruda's tone in these engaging poems.

From the start of his career, Neruda was a poet of the senses, but in the odes he is at his most direct. Everything has not only a sound and a color but a smell, a taste, a texture, sometimes in startling combinations. In "Ode to the Birds of Chile," ocean light is "acid," parrots "metallic," the southern swan a "ship/of silver/ and mourning velvet." There is enough vibrant writing about food and drink in these poems to arouse the most jaded gourmet. Like great recipes, Neruda's odes to the lemon, tomatoes, wine, salt and maize unlock the possibilities in what might have seemed mundane. "Ode to Conger Chowder" actually *is* a recipe, with the poet inviting us to skin the eel, "caress/that precious/ivory" of garlic before tossing it in the pot, and savor the final product of this Chilean specialty so "that in this dish/you may know heaven."

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The grace and humor of these food poems make them a real delight, but they are more than rich confections. As an "elemental" act, eating—along with working—is at the center of Neruda's political vision in the odes. In "Ode to Maize" he delves into the history of this most basic American crop, setting its promise of mass nutrition against the reality of inequality and hunger. When he looks at salt, the first thing he thinks about is the salt miner. For Neruda food and other pleasures are our birthright—not as gifts from the earth or heaven but as the products of human labor. As they celebrate the sheer wonder of being alive, the odes lead us back to origins. They are the clearest—and surely the most inviting—illustrations of Marxist materialism I know.

Neruda was a poetic Antaeus, constantly rejuvenated by making contact with the ground. The odes and *Canto General* draw their strength from a commitment to nameless workers—the men in the salt mines, the builders of Macchu Picchu—and the fundamental value of their labor. This is all very Old Left, of course. As the statues topple in the former Soviet republics and Eastern Europe, it may seem anachronistic to read what a faithful Communist had to say about Latin America and the world as a whole. But the collapse of the Second World hasn't ended the problems of the Third. If anything, it should make the pattern of oppression in Latin America—and the heavy hand of the colossus to the north in supporting it—even more clear. *Canto General* is an excellent corrective to the self-congratulatory versions of history we are hearing these days. The odes take us back to the elemental facts behind history. Both books are radical in the best sense of the term. They ask questions that get to the root of the matter: Where do things come from? Who suffers and who doesn't? Why? □

Give Me an 'L'

ROBIN L. EINHORN

STRUGGLES FOR JUSTICE: Social Responsibility and the Liberal State. *By Alan Dawley. Harvard University. 538 pp. $27.95.*

United States historians, particularly those on the left, have contributed to the present political irrelevance of history. The problem has little to do with the much-decried "balkanization" of historical research into specialized subfields, and is not a result of the replacement of political by social and cultural history in the research agendas of the most able scholars and students. Nor, Russell Jacoby's quotable horrors aside [see "Banked Fires," September 19, 1987], can it be traced to the use of technical jargon in scholarly discourse.

Rather, the problem is directly political. It is a result of the disillusionment of the New Left generation of historians now in their 40s who currently dominate academic historical discussion—on this the right-wing critics of academia are on the mark, though the causes are demographic (the baby boom) rather than conspiratorial (a "long march through the institutions"). The problem is expressed in a refusal by these scholars to define "liberalism" in history the way most people, including academics in the less rarefied social sciences, define it in everyday political speech.

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There are solid historical reasons for this. To the New Left radicals of the 1960s, "liberals" were the blandly hypocritical "best and brightest" responsible for the Vietnam War, and "liberalism" nothing but a fundamentally dishonest conservatism. Nevertheless, the continuing refusal of New Left historians to ascribe "liberal" content to "liberalism" makes history more than irrelevant: It makes its study feel almost like an intensive training course in the politics of despair.

Strong language? Consider the analysis contained in Alan Dawley's masterful new synthesis of a vast and diverse array of recent scholarship in early twentieth-century American history, *Struggles for Justice: Social Responsibility and the Liberal State*. Thoroughly researched, beautifully written and ambitious in scope, this could almost be the book that finally sends Richard Hofstadter's 1955 classic *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* out of print. Dawley here answers the many calls issued by Thomas Bender and other historians over the past decade for a politically centered, synthetic narrative of a large chunk of U.S. history; for a single, coherent story that ties together the specific findings of what Dawley, not unjustly, describes as "a small army" of historians (cited by legion in his footnotes); and for a general analysis in which race, class and sex are not just included but integral. (He is somewhat less successful with race than the others.) Even better, where Bender demanded that such a synthesis be "political" but could imagine it being oriented around a concept no closer to conventional notions of politics than the Habermasian "public sphere," Dawley assumes and insists that the control and use of government power is the core political terrain, especially in a nation that considers itself a democracy. The "struggles for justice" were conducted in many realms (economy, ideology and family, not to mention electoral politics), but the state was a key player in all of them.

Dawley organizes his story around what he calls the transformation of liberalism in the first four decades of the twentieth century, a transformation made necessary by what was widely perceived (because of the shocking violence of both race and labor relations as the century opened) as a radical misfit between the "existing liberal state" and the massive social changes associated with the creation of a mass-production-based (and mass-reproduction-based) industrial society. It is not a simple story, but it amounts, at bottom, to the replacement of an American version of the English laissez-faire dogma—the definition of "liberalism" New Left historians of antebellum America almost always use, de spite the fact that when the word wa used at the time in the U.S. it was gene ally a mere synonym for "large" (as i "make a liberal contribution")—by ideology that survived the Progres Era conflict between "progressive li alism" and "managerial liberalism

Where "progressive liberals"—in ing Jane Addams, Florence Kelley, ence Darrow and even Eugene D demanded public restraints on bu state-sponsored social welfare pr an empowered labor movement, suffrage and legal access to birth "managerial liberals"—mostly of the major corporations—off government in industry" as preferable to both anarchic and true social democracy. "gressive liberals" tried to economy and society, "ma als" sought to enhance powers of a supposedly enlightened corporate The latter version won,

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putably, by the end of World War I, creating the twentieth-century pro-corporate "liberalism" that New Left scholars have always loathed, and this mainly because—as they defined it—it really was conservative rather than liberal.

Of course, the New Left historians were hardly the first to engage in the practice of artful naming of "liberals." Arthur Schlesinger Jr., after all, had contended that the history of the Democratic Party from Andrew Jackson to Franklin Roosevelt consisted in a continuous "liberal" struggle against "the business community" (notwithstanding the clear line from antebellum Southern Democrats to Civil War Confederates, not claimed as "liberals" for rather obvious reasons). Still, we may wonder whether the New Left approach to naming the "liberals" does not cause more interpretive confusion than it solves, and one way to pursue this is to look at the approach's results in Dawley's capable hands.

The heart of the book is the Progressive Era, and Dawley charts a path through this complex terrain with clarity and, at times, bold originality. The concerns of industrial workers in those years, he explains, impinged on politics because they comprised a larger proportion of the U.S. population in 1920 than ever before or since—40 percent of the work force. The concerns of women impinged because of "mass production/mass reproduction," by which Dawley means the role of social, public and commercial institutions in reshaping family life (rising white-collar job opportunities for women outside the home, longer schooling and commercialized entertainment for the young, iconoclastic sexual rebellion in urban bohemian niches). "Together with corporate capitalism and industrial workers," Dawley summarizes, "the New Woman was one of the major social forces of the modern age."

There were other forces also, particularly the nationalist and racialist ideologies powering U.S. imperialist ventures (nationalism was "the ideal mask for dominant interests"), and Southern racism, which also absorbed and diffused conflicts over capitalism. Dawley nicely juxtaposes the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist fire with the 1915 lynching of Leo Frank (in the name of protecting white Southern womanhood from capitalist greed): "If the North could fail to render social justice, southern politics had a way of avoiding the question altogether."

In this context, the "progressive liberals" and "managerial liberals" staged their contest, and the real surprise in Dawley's account is the seriousness with

STORY

One day she said, "Oh, babysit Michael for me,
will you, Joe?" Some things she had to do—you know.
Well, why not? Sure. Okay. So, fine, he stayed.
Besides, he felt it for the little guy
who had this look of being freaked—completely—
so uptight you'd swear his *ears* could scream,
an only kid, and no real dad around
to set him straight—which Joe related to.
Well, they hung at the house awhile, and then
he had this bright idea, took him to the zoo.
One thing and another, they got back late,
after dark, and she'd been home for hours
and getting really ticked, as he saw right off
—even though the kid was okay, in fact, great,
happy instead of hyper, for a change.
And here he'd even brought home a Cracker Jacks
which he handed her with the sweetest smile,
like it was a special joke they had going,
and got her to open it and show the prize.
She wasn't having: not the stupid popcorn,
not the dumb prize, not Joseph playing cute.
"Where was you?" was all she said, and gave the kid
ı good long onceover, checking him out.
o he went, "What, didn't you see my note?"
nd took her by the arm and nicely walked her
/er to the fridge. And there it was, of course,
der the purple fish magnet on the door.
e looked at it hard, like for minutes, thinking,
ı then all she went was, "Oh." Like that. "Oh."

would think that was that. It wasn't. It was,
could say, the beginning of the end.
ure, they had their good times after that,
she'd seem to lighten up and go along,
was nothing like before, because
and more she had this mean look on her
ı catch her looking at the wall when he talked.
's eating you?" he'd say, "what's biting your ass?"
Once she answered, "Nothing *you* could understand."
And he never did, not which or what or why
or how he got put in the wrong or what
he spent so much time trying to make up for.
All he knew is that he could honestly say
—and every so often swore it to himself—
he never once meant anything but good.
And look what it got him. Tell him it paid!

Oh yeah, maybe she *would* tell him *what*, as he
so couthly put it, *was biting her ass*
—except she was too smart to say anything,
was sorry she'd let on as much as she had,
because that time he brought Michael home late,
that was a message he was sending her.
There she was, not thinking anything special,
tidying, putting away some things she bought.
She asked herself what kept them, where were they.
She went to the door three or four or five times
and looked out into the empty driveway.
She sat down again and tried to eat.
Back then when she was still such a prize fool.
Suddenly something started clicking away,
like the night was typing itself into her head.
And then she was reading the words.
Then she saw black. It was Joe telling her:
I can get at you anytime—through your kid.
So it didn't matter how good he might be,
and he was alright as far as people went,
or didn't realize what his actions told,
or that she could be mean, distrustful, sneaky
—she had to be, because he had it easy,
but she was fighting just to survive,
she was fighting for her life!
Right then she decided: when she was sure
he couldn't get back at her, he would *go*.

Irving Feldman

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which he takes the progressives. New Left historians generally have downplayed what Dawley sees by 1917 as a "cross-class alliance of middle-class reformers, social feminists, and labor advocates [which] was successful in building a few social-justice planks into the governing system." It could not last, of course, but

> For some dozen years insurgent forces at the grass roots had taken the initiative. . . . Unwilling to rest content in the face of social injustice, they threw down the gauntlet of reform whenever the New Woman demanded equal suffrage and birth control, or the labor movement demanded industrial democracy and social welfare, or socialists called for nationalization of the giant corporations. This was progressivism at the grass roots, and ever since, the term *progressive* has been applied to the junction point between liberalism and the left.

This is a stirring summary of the triumphs of progressivism, but the last sentence is the crucial one. The "corporate-regulatory complex" forged by Woodrow Wilson (as a "managerial liberal") won the fight to redefine "liberalism" for the twentieth century and then, Dawley argues, through the outright repression of World War I and the Red Scare, undermined hopes for a future reconciliation with progressive forces. Thus "liberalism" and "progressivism" became antagonists, with "social justice" concerns and "grass roots" energies associated only with the latter.

The "transformation of liberalism" is complete by 1920, but Dawley is only three-quarters of the way through his book, which goes on to consider the 1920s and the New Deal. He is less convincing and far less coherent on the 1930s than the 1910s, in part because he cannot rely on a monographic literature of comparable quality or density, but in part simply because he has already finished the story that had organized his argument. The New Deal is little more than a sad denouement to the triumph of the "managerial" version of liberalism, and the best Dawley can say for it is that it was better than what happened in Germany. ("But what would not look good against the Nazis? Surely, there are higher hopes against which to measure the New Deal.") The New Deal, Dawley says, cannot even take credit for avoiding fascism in America: "Roosevelt may have saved liberalism; he may have saved capitalism; but grass-roots social movements were the saviors of democracy."

With evident frustration, Dawley gives up on an effort to define the term "New Deal liberalism": "Whatever one may choose to call it—corporate liberalism, liberal capitalism, or interest-group liberalism—the fact was that the new system was more congruent with corporate dominance . . . than was the old." He drops promising hints about the replacement of "social equality" with "social security" in liberal thought ("Security was the very cornerstone of the New Deal"), and earlier he had found "insecurity" central to the presumably grass-roots concerns of industrial workers, but he never fully explains this shift, at least not in enough detail for it to carry such interpretive weight. The New Deal was "liberal" but it was not "progressive," and this, to Dawley and other New Left historians, has been its unforgivable failure. To be "liberal" is to be "capitalist," "hegemonic" and "congruent with corporate dominance." The shift during the Progressive Era had given liberalism planning capacity and a sometimes-human face, but by the time of the New Deal that ideology contained little of value for those who would challenge the powerful or pursue justice, particularly for those at the grass roots.

In comparison with earlier New Left writers, Dawley has moved the moment of irrevocable loss closer to our own time—Lawrence Goodwyn placed it in 1896, making the defeat of the populist "movement culture" the last stand against corporate domination. Yet I cannot help but think that as liberals, progressives or even unrepentant leftists, historians should not be trying to declare an "end to history" decades before we were born. If we believe that the really important battles were irrevocably lost long ago, there seems little reason to write history; but it is unclear what one should write in such a bleak, "post-everything" world except satire. It is no accident that H.L. Mencken was an icon to the disillusioned young in the 1920s. The "lost generation" has much in common with the New Left generation, even down to the unjust war through which liberal politicians derailed the reforms they were supposed to be championing. Like the campus radicals of the 1960s, they felt betrayed and co-opted by these politicians. They too despaired of politics as an arena for the pursuit of justice. Many of them retreated into private quests for personal fulfillment, and they watched with impotent rage as state power was delivered—for over a decade—into the hands of a reactionary business elite who knew exactly what *they* wanted to do with it.

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I have no special brief for Franklin Roosevelt and no desire to paint the New Deal as the socialist revolution it clearly was not. Yet it did define a liberal agenda still with us, an agenda that includes the struggles of workers organizing against corporate management, of African-Americans fighting to abolish racism and, though less directly, of women seeking freedom from patriarchy. The very fact that George Bush would attack the Democrats with the "L-word" is evidence of a mainstream political home for these struggles. Surely Bush and his corporate cronies would have no problem with "liberalism" if it were what the New Left historians seem to think it is. Surely the Republicans would not bother to launch massive propaganda campaigns to delegitimize an ideology that really is their own. Yes, the Democratic Party has betrayed us in its weakness and confusion. After the 1924 election there was much speculation about whether so badly divided a party (it had elected only one President in a generation) could survive at all and, in their weakness, Democratic leaders aped Republicans in cheering a "prosperity" that excluded the poor. It was a very shabby performance and, in retrospect, an embarrassing one.

What's in a name? Only the fact that most people use it. To be relevant to public debate today, American historians must transcend disillusioning frustrations that are now twenty years old. We should give liberalism yet another chance, write heroic histories of it, show that it is and always has been different from and better than a right-wing conservatism that champions a "good society" of egregious inequality and mass misery. The reform victories of earlier generations have often been hollow, if not worse. We should try to learn from these mistakes as we again face the entrenched and powerful enemies of justice and try to take the government away from them. But to learn in this way, we must be willing to believe that the earlier reformers were worth learning from, that they were better than those they opposed and that the "struggle for justice" is far from over. We need this kind of confidence if we are to banish the self-doubting despair that is smothering liberalism today. □

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MARGARET SPILLANE

Dancing at Lughnasa

When I was small my father's mother used to ask me the following riddle: "A man without eyes/Saw plums on a tree,/He neither took plums nor left plums—/Now how could this be?" The answer had to do with plurals: The man had one eye, so he was "without eyes." There were two plums hanging on the tree, and he took one of them, therefore neither taking nor leaving "plums." My grandmother asked me many such riddles. I knew it was because she wanted to make me smart. I thought that the asking of such riddles had something to do with her being from Ireland.

In Brian Friel's splendid new play, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, now on stage at the Plymouth Theatre, it is Maggie Mundy, the hearty, adoring aunt of 7-year-old Michael, who poses an almost identical riddle. She tosses the child numerous other puzzles and brain-twisters as she feeds the chickens or makes the bread, never missing an opportunity to make him smarter. Aunt Kate, a schoolteacher, treats Michael to a bedtime story every night, and aunts Rose and Agnes look up from their piecework jobs knitting gloves to smile out the window at him. Chris, the youngest Mundy sister and Michael's mother, modestly attempts to disguise her pride in the boy. But all five women take immense and evident pleasure in the child's existence. Their unfussy but comprehensive affections allow Michael to live that most enviable sort of childhood—a bright safe haven made of love and vigilance, yet one that allows him to stray at leisure along the roads of his own imagination.

All of the sisters are unmarried, living together in one small rural house near the fictional village of Ballybeg, Ireland. It is August of 1936. Recently the household has grown to include their Uncle Jack, a priest whose failing health is the ostensible reason for his return home after twenty-five years as a missionary in Uganda. In fact, his superiors have removed Jack because his Christian purpose has all but dissolved in his enthusiastic embrace of the ancient African beliefs his mission was meant to extirpate.

The other recent addition to the household is the Mundys' first radio, an unpredictable wireless set given to long silences, then sudden tempestuous bursts of music. Maggie wants to name the new set Lugh, after the Irish pre-Christian god of the harvest (whose festival, Lughnasa, is being celebrated in the hills behind Ballybeg as the play opens). But Kate objects to the pagan intrusion, so the set gets christened Marconi.

Still another person inhabits the outer edge of this family circle: the young Welshman Gerry, a not particularly successful traveling salesman and ballroom dance instructor, who also happens to be Michael's father. Gerry drifts unannounced to Ballybeg every year or so. Gerry is clearly less than a responsible dad. Indeed, Friel seems skeptical about whether men have much that is practical to contribute to the maintenance of community life: None of the male characters in *Lughnasa* do much to guarantee the material survival of the group.

It is precisely its loving, eloquent vindication of these women's contributions that makes *Lughnasa* a masterpiece of the most astonishing kind. It is hard to think of any play that has more explicitly honored women's work—manual, intellectual and spiritual—as the foundation upon which community survival is built. But Friel does not reduce their lives to a sum of noble drudgeries; all around their slow spirals of work are the felicities of song, joke and rhyme, the sharp, polished notes of opinion and dispute, the spice of anticipation.

In *Lughnasa*, dance emerges as a force both seductive and terrifying, and with as rich a multiplicity of forms and meanings as language itself. From the few seconds of Rose's and Maggie's music-hall kicks and flounces in the opening scene to the stunningly executed ballroom steps in kitchen and farmyard, dance outstrips the primacy of the word, "as if," says narrator Michael, "the very heart of life and all its hopes might be found in those assuaging notes and those hushed rhythms and in those silent and hypnotic movements." And then there is that astonishing moment when cosmic forces and the voice of the capricious radio converge in an instant, when ancient Irish dance bursts like a spark so intense that in a second the house seems devoured by flames, the five sisters whooping and stomping inside a conflagration powerful enough

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to consume all oxygen, and the audience must gasp for breath.

What Friel achieves in *Dancing at Lughnasa* owes everything to faith in the absolute authenticity of the home ground and that terrain's capacity to sustain the epic. It is also an intensely political play: To turn a sixties platitude upside down, *Lughnasa* demonstrates how the political ends up being personal. Ecclesiastical bigotry and large-scale industrial reorganization bring down the Mundy household virtually overnight. And within the scope of an impoverished family, it is the least powerful members who are the swiftest destroyed. Far away from the house in Ballybeg where Agnes and Rose knit their gray gloves, industrialists are putting in place the rational mechanisms of progress that will end such cottage industries—without guaranteeing employment for the displaced workers. This far-off decision lands on Agnes and Rose like a boulder flung out of heaven, a shock of such finality that recovery of their small place in the community is impossible, and the two disappear.

Director Patrick Mason allows the play's provocative ambiguities to blossom: the startling breadth of commentary made with the turn of a head or a heel in dance; the playfulness and generosity of changing partners; but also the grave and deep significance of a glance that lingers, or a kiss on a forehead. He catches and frames the hesitation in each character, as she or he hovers between stated belief and unarticulated desire.

Joe Vanek's magnificent stage design permits instant comprehension of the material conditions of the Mundy family's life: a kitchen containing little more than the bare necessities but graced with its inhabitants' personal touches—a bouquet of blossoms, a decorative piece of pottery. And right outside the door of these straitened circumstances is the gleaming extravagance of nature at harvest time: a field of dense gold hay studded with crimson poppies. Trevor Dawson's lighting fills both those golden fields and the Mundy kitchen with glorious west of Ireland late summer sun.

But most astonishing of all are the actors. Rosaleen Linehan plays the law-enforcing Kate not as someone smug in her allegiance to the rules but as a survival-minded guardian intent on keeping her just-subsisting family from flying off the margin. Dearbhla Molloy's Maggie is more than the buoyant wisecracker of the family; her talent for perennial cheer is an emblem of stamina, a weapon against any trace of fatalism, which could turn the family's daily struggle to collapse. Gerard McSorley moves with utter authority between the two Michaels, playing both the adult narrating his memories of home, and his own 7-year-old self. His is the crucial job of jarring the audience away from a stroll down the path of conditioned responses: He keeps them at a Brechtian distance, insisting that they penetrate this play with their brains as well as their hearts.

Robert Gwilym plays Gerry with a wonderful physical grace—the Fred Astaire stance, the measured swing of hips and arms. Gwilym's Gerry is never merely an unctuous drifter living off his charm. He is both hopeful and fragile enough to be more fully human than the sum of his weaknesses. Donal Donnelly's magnificent vocal instrument provides the strayed missionary Jack with the ex-

PORTRAIT OF A COUPLE ON AN EVENING
LATE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Impatient for home,
the after-work traffic fanning out along
the wet streets, a jagged sound,
like huge sheets of construction paper torn
their length, and through

the walls, the shudder
of the furnace, as though a hundred thousand
bottle-flies were trapped between
the clapboards and the plaster. A gentler
rain blows across

the TV screen, where
a foreign journalist reports that carloads
of Duvalier's banned Tontons
Macoutes have been firing at random at
the polling place.

The darker crimes are
faceless in that lidless, immemorial
eye: A world outside, a world
within. So summer's what they talk about,
the meal, their work,

and how they quarrelled
one night in Iowa. The buried longings
that memory stirs. And yet,
in what they can't express they remind us
of something too,

of something we've felt
settle on our lives, in shadow-life of ours.
So forget, for a moment,
the future of their monogamous hearts,
forget the rain,

the traffic, the boot-
soles pressed forever in our century's mud,
for it's all there, whatever
they'd say, the synagogues of pain, the burn-
ished Spirit of

everything that's been
taken away, it's all there, like the burnt match-
head preserved into amber
by the beeswax candle pooling beside
their dinnerware.

Sherod Santos

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act coloration of astonishment, as he puts together tiny pieces of his past like an elderly Adam renaming everything in Eden after years of exile. To watch Donnelly's face flooded with immense relief as Jack recalls and enunciates exactly the word he needs—"ce-re-mo-ny!"—is to understand as if for the first time how the compromise of naming is what provides humans with that track upon which thoughts can cling and gain velocity.

Jack's effortless crossover into his African village's quotidian uses of enchantment demonstrates how spectacularly close to the surface of Irish life lies an ancient treasury of story and ritual. The same is true for Rose, played by Bríd Ní Neachtain, whose mental handicap gives her a slippery grasp on the affairs of the organized world and makes her dependent upon the loving vigilance of Agnes. But beneath this fragile surface lies the authority of the primordial: When Ní Neachtain's Rose crosses the kitchen after a tryst, her face smeared with bilberry juice, her dignified insistence upon erotic entitlement banishes all notions of her as a charming simpleton.

Catherine Byrne's Mater Dolorosa beauty brings a numinous gravity to the role of Chris; a magnificent distractedness and a quelled but unquiet passion suffuse her character like perfume. Agnes could easily have been played as an erasure, a character with neither the household authority of Kate or Maggie, the elegant moods of Chris nor the quirkiness of Rose. But the meticulous physicality of Bríd Brennan's flame-pure performance illuminates the absolute conviction and solidity of Agnes, who knows how small gestures and tender attentions keep vulnerable souls from perishing.

Postscript: According to the arrangement made with Actors' Equity, the Irish cast of *Dancing at Lughnasa* may continue to perform in this country only until March 1, after which a cast of American actors must replace them. Clearly there are times when this rule amounts to a kind of cultural protectionism. For actors to inhabit *Lughnasa* would require more than getting the accents right. Much of what this cast accomplishes arises, like the dances themselves, out of a deep, shared memory. We in the audience have been privileged to share not simply the convergence of great actors with great script, but the collective summoning-up of an ancient, common language of belief and ceremony squarely framed within the difficult timber of recent history. □

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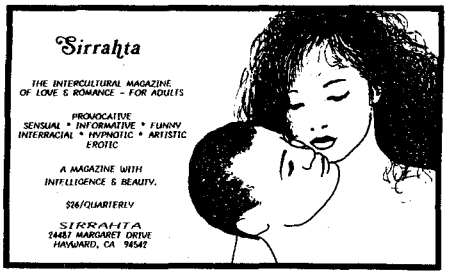

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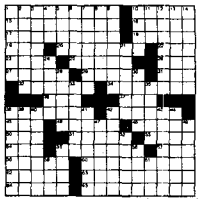

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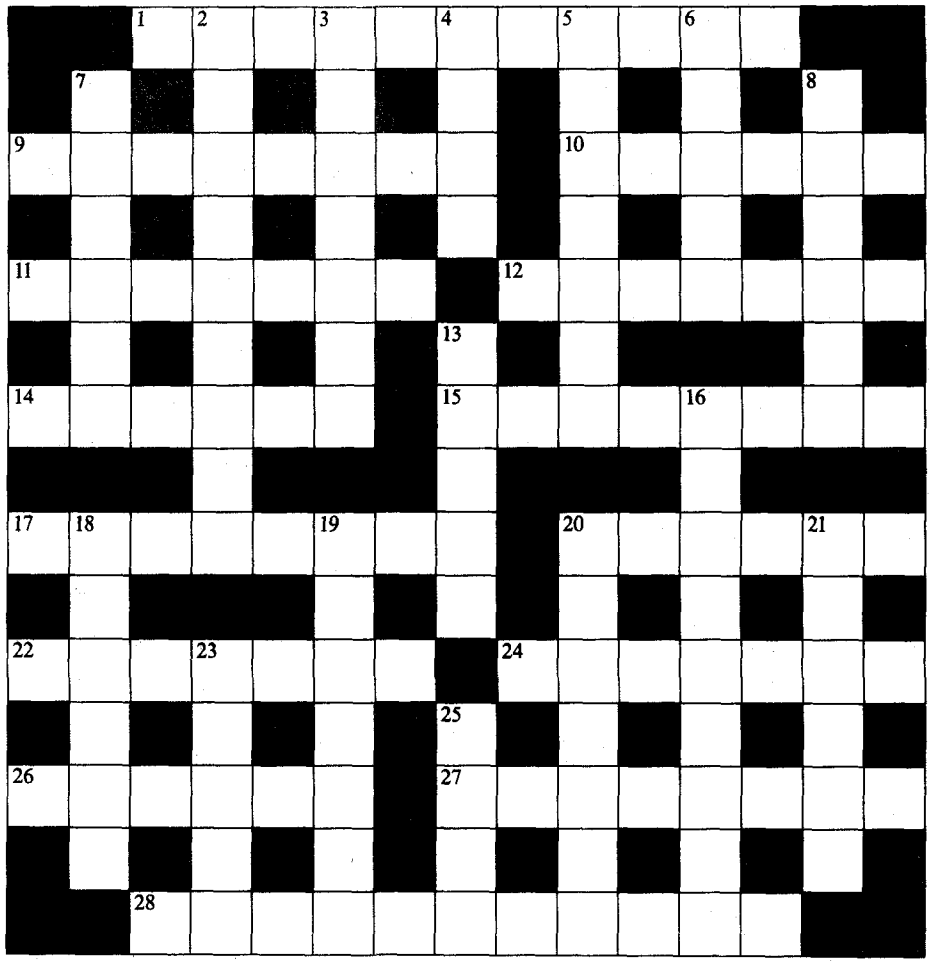
FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Dear, put one of those plaguey things on a tree! (5,6)
9 Caesar's wife's father and the man from Glasgow or Jamaica with quite a bark. (8)
10 Rather damp around a true believer in the Orient. (6)
11 A stretch vehicle in any enviroment might be given as settlement. (7)
12 This day is sometimes said to be associated with this dollar. (7)
14 Fly from point to point, as the old barroom door opens. (6)
15 Not where one eats breakfast, though it might be part of another meal. (8)
17 Seeing that this is not out so far, either? (8)
20 They sound like shallow dishes of twisted strands. (6)
22 Build up in sufficient fashion around what might imply a condition. (7)
24 They might not be very experienced, but they seem to have no bad habits, either! (7)
26 Between one and two hundred at the outside, as they sometimes say as the culminating point. (6)
27 Obvious ill-feeling? That's what too much work does! (8)
28 What a careful person sometimes does with eggs ends up with some credit to the English. (Giants sometimes play in the park!) (11)

DOWN

2 The sort of net Romans used for decoration. (9)
3 It's not mere sin the most noble sort got wrapped up in. (7)
4 and 25 Refer to 6 and 5 (A sort of nog and another in the French?). (4,4)
6 and 5 Failings that one hopes will soon be 4 and 25? (12)
7 One taken in wartime, sick at heart, with what some expect to be down. (6)
8 Brought up thus, as you and I travel in New York. (6)
13 City seen here from a harbor. (5)
16 Concerning what you need for shopping, I see by the sound of it, it's very lifelike! (9)
18 Jack was told to be it, when he got over 28. (6)
19 There's no permanent place for such things when not repaired. (7)
20 How a piece of work is said to stick out? (7)
21 The "collection agency" belonging to them? (6)
23 Part of the argument involves a large number being given to Ms. Lazarus. (5)
25 See 4 down

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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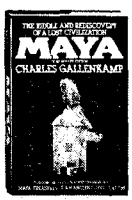

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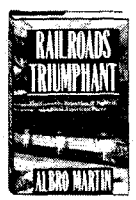

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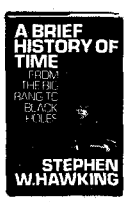

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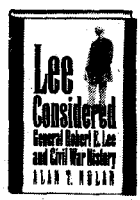

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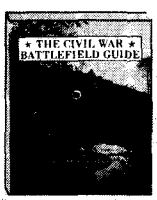

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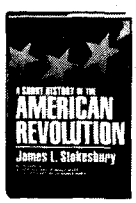

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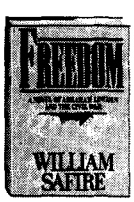

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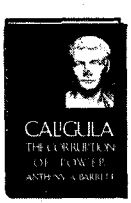

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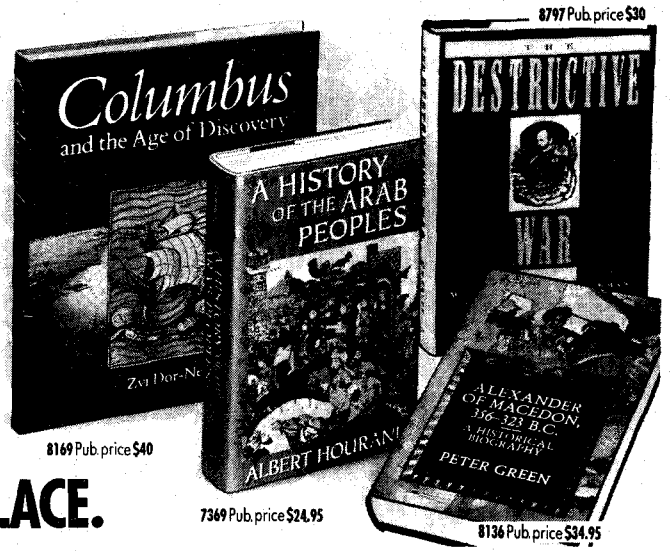

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